

LETTERS

To

COLLINS

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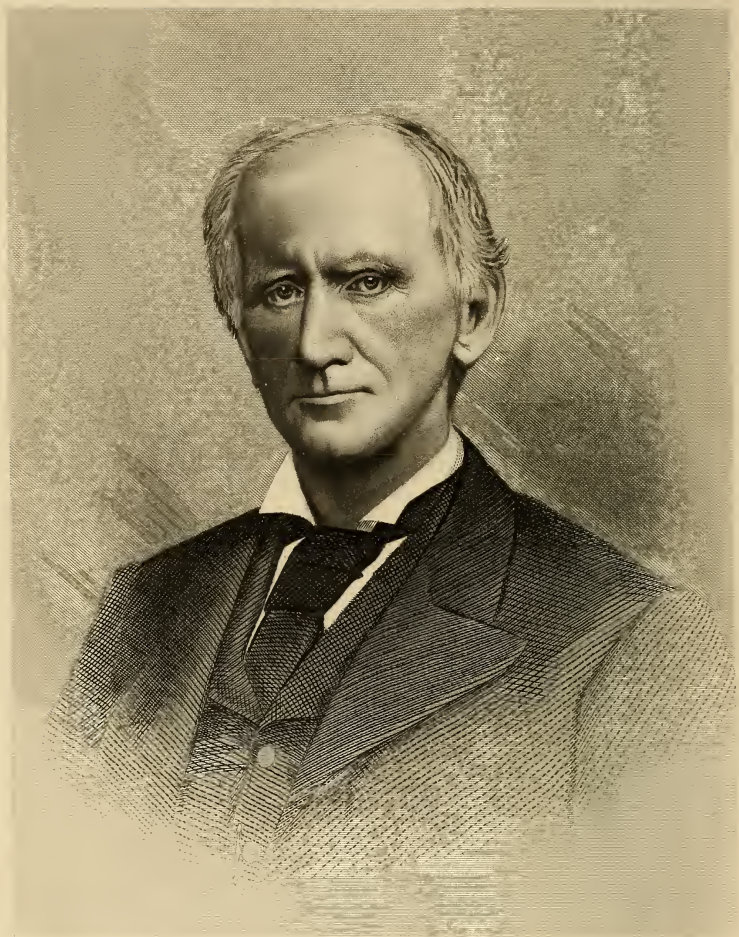












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*Alfred Hewin.*

# LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL:

OR,

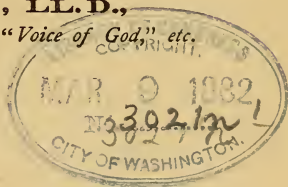
INFIDELITY REBUKED AND  
TRUTH VICTORIOUS.

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BY

**ALFRED NEVIN, D.D., LL.D.,**

*Author of "Nevin's Popular Commentary," "Voice of God," etc.*

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P. W. ZIEGLER & CO.,  
PHILADELPHIA AND CHICAGO.

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“The only argument against the Bible is a bad heart.”

*John, Earl of Rochester.*

“Man is bad enough with Christianity; he would be far worse without it; therefore do not unchain the tiger.”

*Benjamin Franklin, in his letter to Tom Paine.*

“The book—this mighty book—on every line  
Marked with the seal of high divinity:  
On every leaf bedewed with drops of love  
Divine, and with eternal heraldry  
And signature of God Almighty stamped  
From first to last.”

*Pollock.*





# TO COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

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## FIRST LETTER.

SIR: You will not, I am sure, expect from me any apology for addressing you on this subject. Your frequent and furious attacks of the Holy Scriptures on the public platform have placed you in the front of their boldest and bitterest opponents. As reported in the press, you have not hesitated even to sneer at the Bible, and unqualifiedly denounce it as a fable and a fraud. It could not reasonably be expected that those who regard the volume as the citadel of their faith and hope should remain silent under these violent and vicious onslaughts upon it. I propose, therefore, as a believer and minister of the truth which you repudiate, with as much thoroughness as necessarily condensed discussion will allow, to offer for your calm and candid consideration a few thoughts in favor of the super-human origin of the grand old Book—the Book of our Redeemer's gift and our fathers' faith.

I assume that you are not an atheist. The oaths which you have taken at your induction into public office clearly warrant this assumption. Surely, as an honest and honorable man, you would not have pretended to take upon you a religious obligation when you regarded such a ceremony as a farce, God a figment,

responsibility a dream and death an eternal sleep. Such duplicity, as you well know, would justly damage your character as a public functionary no less than as a teacher of duty. Besides, faith in God is so inherent in the heart of humanity and so essential to our reason that many wise and good men have doubted if ever there lived an intelligent mortal so absolutely destitute of religious belief as is implied in being an atheist. Addison would have told a man who gloried in this distinction that he was an impudent liar, and that he knew it. Bacon accounted atheism to be rather in the lip than in the heart. Dr. Arnold "believed conscientious atheism not to exist." I concur in the sentiment of these eminent men, and have too much respect for your intellect to believe that you have struggled away from the truth which comes to us in the shape of an intuition, and are floundering in the deep, dark, desolate and freezing vacuum through which rolls the doleful and dreadful, not to say devilish, cry of its occupants: "There is no God."

#### THE WORLD WITHOUT THE BIBLE.

Diderot, dying after a life of doubt and disappointment, said to friends that stood by his couch to close his eyes in the last sleep: "I am about to take a leap in the dark." So must every one say in the final hour if the Bible is a fiction or a myth. If *this* Book is not from God this world has never heard a word from Him. All through the ages which have rolled away, with their varied and vexed experience, struggling aspirations, anxious fears and earnest inquiries as to the past, the present and the future, He has remained dumb and silent; has dropped no sentence

or syllable out of heaven, has performed no act, has given no sign that He has ever had a thought concerning His human creation since the day He finished it. There He has sat and heard the human cries and sobs, and even the tragic histories of those who have plunged into the shoreless floods of the dark and untried waters, and never unfolded a banner or erected a beacon light. Hence we are shut up to the "*Bible or nothing.*"

Tremendous alternative! Let the Bible be ignored and existence becomes the darkest of enigmas and the direst of calamities. To man, in his bewilderment, discontent, and longings without aim or warrant, the grazing brutes of the forest or field become objects of envy. Heaven is unpeopled; its doors are forever barred against our wretched race, and the fatal sting is restored to the king of terrors; death, instead of being to ourselves or to our beloved dead an uplifting of everlasting doors and an enfolding in everlasting arms, becomes an enemy as appalling to the reason as to the senses; the usher to a charnel-house, where highest faculties and noblest feelings lie crushed with the animal wreck; an infinite tragedy, maddening, soul-sickening—a "blackness of darkness forever."

We have, as has been well said, only to think what a change would pass on the aspect of our race if the Bible were suddenly withdrawn and all remembrance of it swept away, in order to arrive at some faint notion of the worth of the volume. Let it be removed, and with it must go the moral chart by which alone earth's population can be guided. Ignorant of the nature of God, and only guessing at their own immortality, the tens of thousands would be as mariners tossed on a wide ocean, without a pole-star and without a compass.

The blue lights of the storm fiend would burn ever in the shrouds, and when the tornado of death rushed across the waters there would be heard nothing but the shrieks of the terrified and the groans of the despairing. It were to mantle the earth with a more than Egyptian darkness; it were to dry up the fountains of human happiness; it were to take the tides from our waters and leave them stagnant, and the stars from our heavens and leave them in sackcloth, and the verdure from our valleys and leave them in barrenness; it were to make the present all recklessness and the future all hopelessness, the maniac's revelry and then the fiend's imprisonment, if that precious volume could be annihilated which tells us of God and of Christ, unveils immortality, instructs in duty and woos to glory.

#### REVELATION A POSTULATE OF HUMAN NATURE.

Beyond all question, Sir, revelation is a postulate of human nature. What am I? Whence am I? Whither am I bound? Why am I here? What relation has my here to my hereafter? These and kindred queries rise clamorous and pressing upon the soul. There comes up from the earliest ages that have left us their record the cry of the inquiring, longing spirit: "O, that I knew where I might find Him, and how shall I order my ways before Him? If a man die, shall he live again?" Especially is the grand question on which hinges human destiny—"How can a man be just with God?"—wrapt in profoundest obscurity. Natural religion does not answer it. "In nature, in God's creation," says Professor Silliman, "we discover only laws—laws of undeviating strictness, and sore

penalties attached to their violations. There is associated with natural laws no system of mercy. That dispensation is not revealed in nature, and is contained in the Scriptures alone."

The world over there has been a deep-seated thought of a revelation as necessary to make known man's origin, duty and destiny. The philosophers of classic antiquity were represented by Plato when, in addressing Socrates, he said: "We ought, therefore, by all means, to do one of these two things—either by hearkening to instruction and by our own diligent study to find out the truth, or, if this be impossible, then to fix upon that which to human reason appears best and most probable, and to make this our raft while we sail through life, *unless we could have a more sure and safe conveyance, such as some Divine communication would be.*" We see the universal appetency for revelation in the ready faith with which sacred books, oracles and prophets have always been received; in the eager votaries which "Spiritualism" draws around it, and in the testimony of Christian missionaries in earlier and later times that, while they have often encountered insuperable obstacles, they never met with antecedent scepticism as to the fact of a revelation.

Can it, then, be believed that, with such a universal need, desire and expectation of a revelation of God's will, none has been given? Can it be that He has furnished light for the eye, sound for the ear, fragrance and food for their respective organs, and a supply for every rightful demand that rises in our nature but this highest, deepest, most momentous want of the soul? Has He who preserves man and beast, feeds the young ravens when they cry, and hears the lions' whelps when

they call for nourishment, forsaken His noblest, greatest work, precisely at that point where it was most important that the law of supply existing below it should continue to act? Has He left His crowning creature in the crowning purpose and need of his existence as the ostrich leaves her egg in the lone and trackless desert, without parental oversight and bereft of parental supply? No! The deepest instincts of our nature, the widest generalizations of our experience and the calmest conjectures of our reason unite in saying it cannot be—God *must* have spoken.

#### WHY DO INFIDELS ASSAULT ONLY THE BIBLE?

I should like just here, Sir, to call your attention to the fact that modern infidels and scientists do not assault the Koran or the Vedas as they do the Bible. Why do they pursue this course? Undoubtedly it is because, in their judgment, the former are weak, awaken distrust, repel the enlightened and cultivated, and fall to the ground by their own feebleness; whilst the latter has in it moral and spiritual power—power enough to command assent, to rule the conscience and inspire the devotion of the noblest and most intelligent men of our own age, as it has done in every previous age since the Christian era. Hence their opposition, and in it it is not difficult to see a concession to the grand superiority of Christianity; all the more potent because not intended.

#### GREAT MEN'S OPINIONS OF THE BIBLE.

But, passing this point, let me remind you of the great men who have accepted and indorsed the Bible as the revelation God has made of His character and will.



Among these are Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Bacon, Lord Chief-Justice Hale, Hon. Robert Boyle, John Locke, Sir William Jones, John Selden, Thomas Lord Erskine, Joseph Addison, Wilberforce, Franklin, Johnson, Bonaparte, Sir Walter Scott, Patrick Henry, John Quincy Adams, Chancellor Kent, Guizot, Daniel Webster, Chief-Justice Gibson. It would be easy to extend the list, almost indefinitely, by such names as those of Grotius, Leibnitz, Washington, Blackstone, Mansfield, Marshall, Story, Sydenham, Boerhave, Gregory, Cooper, Milton, Butler, Brewster; but enough have been given to show that the Bible has met with success in high quarters. It has commended itself to the widest understanding, the most accurate and extensive culture, the most careful and exhaustive investigation, and withal the most pure and exalted character. It has even been eulogized by infidels themselves. Lord Bolingbroke declared that "the Gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence and of universal charity." Rousseau said: "This Divine Book, the only one which is indispensable to the Christian, need only to be read with reflection to inspire love for its author and the most ardent desire to obey its precepts." And Huxley himself makes this acknowledgment: "Take the Bible as a whole, make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate, . . . and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur."

Is it not hard to conceive why *such* a Book should, from any good motive, be condemned and opposed? Must not its assailant have marvellous confidence in his own ability? And must he not, in his moments

of sober reflection, feel that he is, to say the very least, acting most unreasonably in making a volume that has received *such* approval and indorsement the object of low witticisms, scurrilous ridicule and horrible blasphemy?



## SECOND LETTER.

SIR: The first problem I present for solution, on your theory, is the *unity* of the Bible.

The volume contains, in all, sixty-six books, from the pens of forty different writers, men of every sort of temperament, every degree of cultivation, and every variety of order—priests, as Ezra; poets, as Solomon; prophets, as Isaiah; kings, as David; herdsmen, as Amos; statesmen, as Daniel; scholars, as Moses, Luke and Paul; fishermen, “unlearned and ignorant men,” as Peter and John. They were written in very different forms—in history, biography, parable, letters, proverbs, poems, speeches—and amidst the strangest diversity of place and condition—in the centre of Asia, among the sands and cliffs of Arabia, the fields and hills of Palestine, in the courts of the Jewish Temple, in the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho, in the palace of Shushan, on the idolatrous banks of Chebar, in the dungeons of Rome, and one of them in a lonely island of the Ægean Sea. They were written in very different circumstances—in various phases of joy, of sorrow, of affliction and of tribulation—and in very distant periods—the first author, Moses, having lived 400 years before the siege of Troy and 900 years before the most ancient sages—Thales, Pythagoras and Confucius—and the last, John, more than 1500 years later than Moses. The compilation

of these writings, moreover, was not included in the intention of their several authors. These wrote as they were moved to write, under the pressure of the circumstances that surrounded them, in some cases to meet special exigences, in all cases for the particular benefit of those to whom their compositions were delivered. In the growth of the Bible the Providential design outran the thoughts and purposes of the individual writers.

#### THE BIBLE'S SINGLENES OF PURPOSE.

Now, Sir, in looking at this Book, with its two great divisions—the Mosaic economy and the Christian—what do we find it to be? It is manifestly pervaded by unity. It has, to the fullest extent, that necessary condition of any book which is to make a deep impression upon the minds and hearts of men—*singleness of purpose*, and that purpose kept in view throughout every page. The Old and the New Testaments are undeniably but different transcripts of the great and glorious original. The one is a lock with wards and interstices, and the other is the exquisitely-cut key, which completely unlocks it, and opens a door of entrance to the bright vision of light and immortality. The one is the portrait seen by moonlight, the other is the same portrait seen by sunlight—the one hazy and dim, but still real; the other bright and illuminated, like a noonday landscape, on which the minutest and most majestic features may be read and understood by him that runs while he reads.

Thus the Book that was written by persons of so widely variant professions, circumstances, idiosyncrasies and trials, and so far separated in distance and time, is always consistent with itself. It is not a fanciful,

accidental or forced congeries of documents, but a normal development and growth. Truth is the great and only instrumentality which it makes use of in order to transform, purify and elevate the human character. No matter how its variously gifted writers teach—whether by history, biography, song, allegory, parable, argument or dogmatic testimony and affirmation—*religious truth* forms the great and essential element in all their instructions. They all have the same end in view; all are pointing to the same object; all without any projected collusion, are advancing the same scheme; each brings in his several contingent without any apparent consideration how it may unite with the portions brought by other contributors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any visible intention to make out a case, without indeed any actual resemblance more than that every separate portion being derived from the same spring, each must be governed by one common principle. These men may be compared to a band of musicians playing a grand anthem without previous practice, or to a number of laborers and masons, who, having no idea of the completed appearance of the edifice on which they are employed, lay stone upon stone in blind obedience to the directing architect until the whole stands forth in sublimity and perfection. The Book which they wrote is evidently a *whole*; it has a beginning, a middle and an end; it is the realization of one mind executed by a number of others. The same spirit and feeling pervade the volume. Its ceremonies and dispensations arise naturally from one another. The same golden thread is to be seen running through all its pages. The comparison of the first few chapters of Genesis with the

closing chapters of the Bible shows us the same great ideas reappearing. In the first we have the heavens and the earth, and in the last the new heavens and new earth. In the one we have the paradise of Eden; in the other, the paradise of God. In the one we are told of the rivers of Eden, and the Tree of Life "in the midst of the garden;" in the other we are told of the River of the water of Life, and the Tree of Life upon its banks, and "in the midst of the Paradise of God." At the beginning of the Bible we have the institution of marriage, and at the end we have "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

#### MORE DEFINITE EVIDENCE OF THE BIBLE'S UNITY.

Look at some more definite evidence of the unity which we affirm. Of the great *facts* narrated in the Scriptures the sacred writers have furnished a perfectly harmonious account. The earliest of them wrote at a later time than some of these events, some of them wrote after the occurrence of them all, while most of those who wrote subsequently to all, or a part of them, make frequent and explicit reference to the whole. Whether their statements be more or less full, or their references more or less incidental, there is no positive discrepancy between them. David celebrates in poetry what Moses records as a historian, while Stephen, Peter and Paul urge in argument the same facts that are recorded by the historian's pen and sung by the prophet's lyre. The *historical* parts of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, are in perfect coincidence with the more *didactic* and *doctrinal* parts. The Epistles of Paul—so full of minute specifications, so replete with allusions to times, places, persons and

events, and written with all the freedom of epistolary correspondence, and without any regard to the order of events—are found to indicate a minute coincidence with the more extended and exact history given by Luke in the “Acts of the Apostles.” So with the four Evangelists. There is, indeed, a difference in their narratives, but they differ without being contradictory. One gives a more full account than another; one writes in chronological order; another interweaves facts as they suit his purpose and without regard to date; one writes to a different people and with a different object from another, and therefore presents the facts with a different phase and complexion. Still their statements, though at a great remove from studied uniformity, are characterized by entire oneness. The *doctrines*, too, which the volume inculcates all agree with each other. They have a mutual dependence and connection; they give one another a reciprocal support and influence; they grow out of each other and all hang together, alike deriving their ripeness, freshness and flavor from the same parent stock. Let a diligent student take up a copy of the Scriptures with copious marginal references and undertake to collate their instructions upon any one doctrine or moral duty, and he will be surprised at the uniformity of their teaching. They never speak for and against the same doctrine; they never bear witness on both sides of any question; nor is there an instance in which they affirm and deny the same thing. That which in reality has any Scripture in its favor has all Scripture in its favor.

## THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT ARE ONE.

The same thing, Sir, as already hinted, may be predicated in relation to the harmony existing between the Old and the New Testament. They are but different parts of the same system. The one necessitated the other. Judaism was the stalk, gradually growing and strengthening, on which the flower of Christianity, in "the fulness of time," exhibited its bud, unfolded its leaves, and diffused its life-giving fragrance. The one was the dawn; the other is the noon. The one was the child; the other is the man. The one was the sapling; the other is the ripe cedar of Lebanon out of which temples are made. The records of both are the same in authority, substance and mode of communication. The same truth, only not with the same fulness and clearness, was conveyed in "sundry times" and "divers manners" by the Prophets, which was made known by the Eternal Word when "He was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

The sacred penmen of both economies all struck one grand key-note—Christ and Him crucified. As in Beethoven's matchless music there runs one idea, worked out through all the changes of measure and of key—now almost hidden, now breaking out in rich, natural melody, whispered in the treble, murmured in the bass, dimly suggested in the prelude, but growing clearer and clearer as the work proceeds, winding gradually back until it ends in the key in which it began and closes in triumphant harmony—so throughout the whole Bible there runs one grand idea—man's ruin by sin and his redemption by grace; in a word, Jesus Christ, the Saviour. From the dim promise at the fall, to the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," which



the apostle saw from the rocky and barren isle, Jesus is set forth as the burden of the promises, the medium of blessings and the object of saving faith.

We might further argue the unity of the Bible from a certain *tone* and *manner* which generally pervade its writers, and which are not found in the same degree in any other, as also from a certain resemblance of *style*, which, however undeniable the differences that discriminate the various authors and attest their individuality, is perceptible in the compositions of Scripture in general,—a diapason which runs through all its complex strain of harmony. It is heard as the surge of ocean is heard above the many-voiced winds which sweep over its surface.

#### HOW IS THIS UNITY TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR?

How, I ask you, shall we account for this unity of the Bible? Remember what kind of unity it is. It is not, as has well been said, that apparent unity which might be produced by a language common to all its parts, for the deepest possible gulf divides the languages in which the Old and New Testament were written. Neither is it an unity produced by likeness of form, for the forms, as we have already seen, are various and diverse as can be imagined; now song, now history, now dialogue, now narrative, now familiar letter, now prophetic vision. Neither is it a unity such as might arise from all parts of the Book being the upgrowth of a single age, and so all breathing alike the spirit of that age, for, as we have also seen, no single age beheld the birth of this Book, which was well nigh two thousand years ere it was fully formed and had reached its final completion. Nor yet can this unity be ac-

counted for from the Book having one class of men for its human authors, since, as previously stated, men not of one class alone, but of many, and those the widest apart—kings and herdsmen, warriors and fishermen, wise men and simple—were employed in writing it. The truth is, that *deeper* than all these outward circumstances, and *in spite* of them all, does the unity of the Scriptures lie, since all these circumstances, in their natural operation, would have tended to an opposite result.

#### IMPOSTURE IMPOSSIBLE.

Suppose, Sir, the Bible to be blotted out of existence, and some forty or fifty persons scattered through different ages of the world had undertaken to write on religious subjects, and their works were comprised in a volume. Who does not see that such a work would have been the merest theological jargon? Let the wild and incoherent speculations of heathen philosophy and the thousand varieties of pagan religion give the answer to this demand. Who does not see also that as soon might men of understanding be induced to climb to the stars as to hope that a new religion, thus conceived and constructed at random, could, as Christianity has done, by the force of its own evidence, win its way through the world, overthrowing every opposing system, extend its triumphs, and finally establish itself in the most civilized nations in spite of the most learned, the most determined and the most powerful opposition?

It follows also in another view, from the unity of the Scriptures, that they had a divine origin. Who could conceive such a plan as they exhibit, slowly unfold it part by part through the ages and bring it to-



gether finished in this Book but the “only wise God?” The idea of such a book being the work of imposture is simply absurd. If fraud was committed it must have been carried on for centuries. If the Bible, one in its various parts, be untruthful, there must have been a combination, not a knot of men at one particular juncture; not of the members of a sect which flourished for a while, but of persons living in widely separated ages and in distant lands, of persons in all grades of society, with jarring interests and dissimilar objects, of hostile principles, Jews and Christians, opposed in everything else but accordant in this—to palm upon the world as facts events which never happened, annals lifelike but of no authority, chronicles of kings, accounts of revolutions and religions, testified to by all of them, but yet baseless and imaginary. There must have been, moreover, bad men who never saw each other, uniting to frame a system of truth which has proved the world’s greatest blessing, and which they severally knew to be false. Such a combination the world has never heard of, and none can believe that it ever existed except those who hate the truth and prefer being “wilfully ignorant.”

“Whence but from Heaven could men unskilled in arts,  
In several ages born, in several parts,  
Weave such agreeing truths? Or how, or why,  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,  
Starving their gain and martyrdom their price?”

Again, the unity of the Bible is a guarantee of the preservation of its integrity. There may be minute errors in making copies of so many writings, for the hand of the scribe is not inspired; there may be a word

dropped out, or a vowel omitted in one passage or another, but the great course of doctrine cannot be eliminated from the Scripture unless the whole fabric be torn into tatters. It is, says an able writer, interwoven, every part with every other, story, law, precept, parable, the biographies of Christ by the Evangelists, and the argument of Christ by the Apostles, until, if one part be thrown away, many others must also and equally be thrown away. The records are so interbraided that one cannot be extracted and the rest left, with any ingenuity or by any force. And here, by the way, important light is thrown upon the difficulties in the Biblical text, of which skeptics have made so much. Necessarily always, by the manifold constitution of the Scriptures, they must amount to very little. They are like scratches on the stones of the Milan Cathedral; like the breaking of a single pane of its pictured glass, or the breaking off of a finger or, possibly, a forearm from one of its five thousand statues. The great structure stands unimpaired, shining, imperial in the serene Italian air. The Bible stands majestic, unfractured, in the same way. God in His wisdom has made it so multiform, so many-sided and various in its parts, that it cannot be destroyed except by annihilating its whole structure.

### THIRD LETTER.

SIR: From some men's silence more instruction can be derived than from other men's speech. Indeed it has become a proverb that it is evidence of wisdom to know when to keep quiet.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

The sciolist, whose pride is as great as his ignorance, will express himself freely on subjects on which the profound scholar prefers to be mute. Many a lawyer has lost a cause by not submitting it without argument to the good sense of the jury. Many a physician has lost the confidence of the public by attempting too much, or by showing in his talk a want of power of diagnosis which seasonable taciturnity might have concealed. Many a man in entering a gallery of paintings or sculpture has betrayed his utter lack of æsthetic cultivation by a boisterous and pretentious manner, the very opposite of that subdued frame which such works of art always generate in those who have taste to appreciate them. How much better did the sacred writers understand the *power of silence* than do many who assail their productions!

### THE BIBLE'S SILENCE.

The Bible has well been likened to a dial in which the *shadow* as well as the *light* informs us. We find

the assumption or silent recognition of God's existence at the beginning of the Book. Besides, instead of an attempt to explain the process of creation, we have a mere declaration of the great and important truth that all things had a beginning, that nothing throughout the wide extent of nature existed from eternity, originated by chance or from the skill of any inferior agent; but that the whole universe was produced by the creative power of God. How wise was this, in comparison with what elaborate and tedious treatises on these subjects would have been! The inspired penmen, with an artlessness that could fear no suspicion, and with the candor which truth ever exhibits, as at once its ornament and evidence, tell us of what Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Peter did that was wrong; that "he that thinketh he standeth may take heed lest he fall." But we never find them extolling themselves. They exhibit no vanity, egotism or ambition. Instead of trumpeting their own praise, or aiming to transmit their fame to posterity, several of them have not so much as put their names to their writings, and those who have are generally out of sight. As we read their history they seldom occur to our thoughts. Who thinks of the Evangelists when reading the four Gospels?

These men do not attempt to remove any difficulty which they must have known their statements would have been likely to occasion to their readers. They do not make any effort to explain or get rid of any apparent discrepancy either in their own records or (if they knew any) in the records of one another. They bespeak no indulgence, as is the usual way of narrators of the marvellous, for the degree in which they tax the credulity of the world, nor deign to give any reason

why the things they narrate, however improbable, should be received. They are never carried away by any pomp of diction into any use of superlatives. They do not express more surprise at one miracle than another. Even in the accounts they give of the birth and crucifixion of Christ, where everything would have tempted to extravagance of statement, we have all that is most sober in the manner of the narration. In *all* cases they left circumstances as they had occurred to make their own impressions, instead of adding to them any reflections of their own. Feeling that the ground was holy on which they stood, invariably did they preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.

#### DOES NOT MINISTER TO CURIOSITY.

Any one writing a book, Sir, that he wished to be very popular would be careful to do two things—or one of them. First, he would minister to human curiosity as much as was in his power. He would make himself acquainted with the numerous strange and speculative inquiries which men are ever ready to propose, and answer them. Or, if this could not be done, he would not touch any subject that he could not thoroughly handle and elucidate. But we find no such disposition on the part of God's amanuenses. How much is there we earnestly long to understand! We would comprehend the origin of evil. We find scars upon the earth—sickly and wailing children, volcano and pestilence, tyranny and wrong—and, with intense anxiety, we ask: If God be God, and if He be love, and if He be pure, whence? why? how? So with other great problems, such as God's existence as

Three in One, and One in Three, the union of the divine nature of Christ with the human in one person, and the reconcilableness of foreknowledge or predestination with free agency and personal responsibility. Especially do we long to know all about the unseen world and its retributions. There is no reserve to which human nature less easily reconciles itself than this. We learn this from a glance at the fables of the Greek and Roman mythologies, or those of Oriental nations, and at the pages of the Koran. Even in the information which sober and temperate commentators are so ready to supply on this subject we see how greedily the human mind revels in speculations regarding the destinies of the future world. But on most of these themes the Bible is entirely silent, and on the most interesting of them all it does little more than tell us that heaven is the unveiling of that sun by whose unclouded light the Christian walks here, and that hell is the punishment—the dark shadow that waits on sin, to which it is bound by a terrible, an irrevocable necessity. And yet, whilst maintaining this reticence, the sacred writers do not shun a subject, though in presenting it clearly enough to be seen, and to answer all the practical purposes of life, they are to leave much of it in shadow.

#### HOW THIS SILENCE IS TO BE EXPLAINED.

How is this? How is it that whilst revelation has its high hills on which it pours the effulgence of its beams, it has also its valleys, chasms and blanks, on which, as we gaze, we can find no other vehicle for our feelings than the words to which an apostle himself was driven: “O, the depth!” Beyond a doubt there must

have been infallible, divine guidance given to the penmen of the Scriptures, to teach and dispose them to stop in their revelation of truth precisely where they did, and where enlightened reason attests they *should* have stopped. "The light of revelation is adapted to the human understanding as natural light is to the eye, in a manner so remarkable as to indicate a higher wisdom as the author of both. False prophets never know where to stop. Mahomet and Swedenborg knew too much. But something seems to have laid a restraint upon prophets and apostles, and to have sobered them in the midst of supernal revelations. They tell us enough for practical purposes, but nothing for merely imaginative or speculative uses. Everything here appears to be fitted to make this world a scene of discipline and moral education for us. Revelation is limited by the spiritual ends of a system of training and trial, and this adaptation evinces the thoughtful provision of the schoolmaster."

In connection with what has been said of the evidence furnished by the Bible's silence of its divine origin, it is important to notice the epoch at which its growth ceased, and it became a finished book. It ends just when all the truth necessary to be revealed has been made known. So long as humanity was growing *it* grew; but when the manhood of our race was reached, when man had attained his highest point, even union with God in His Son, then it comes to a close. It carries him up to this, to his glorious goal—to the perfect knitting again of those broken relations, through the life and death and resurrection of Him in whom God and man were perfectly atoned. So long as there was anything more to tell, any new revelation



of the name of God, any new relations of grace and nearness into which He was bringing His creatures—so long the Bible was a growing, expanding book ; but when all is given, when God, who at divers times spoke to the world by His servants, had now spoken His last and fullest word by His Son, then to this Book, the record of that Word of His, there is added no more, even while there is nothing more to add, though it cannot end until it has shown in prophetic vision how this latest and highest which now has been given to man, shall unfold itself into the glory and blessedness of a perfected Kingdom of Heaven.

#### THE BIBLE'S AVOIDANCES.

Let me ask you, Sir, now, to glance at the *avoidances* of the Bible.

If a company of men unpractised in navigation should launch a vessel on a lake or ocean and shun every reef and shoal, so as to make their voyage in safety, no one would refuse them credit for their success. All the more, too, would their achievement challenge admiration if the waters on which they embarked had never been explored, if the art of sailing was in its infancy, and if instead of all hands starting together at the commencement of the voyage they had come aboard singly at different stages of the progress.

It is easy to conceive that the sacred writers *might* have committed themselves to some theory of science or system of philosophy, in ignorance or error, so as to have been dislodged from their position by subsequent discoveries and developments. We can readily imagine that they had strong temptations to wander into the regions of physical and metaphysical disqui-



sition. From their intellectual peculiarities, indeed, as well as the disposition which *false* pretenders to revelation have shown to grasp everything in their alleged inspired capacity, there was an *a priori* probability that they *would* yield themselves to speculations in the various departments of material and mental investigation. For instance, other so-called sacred books almost invariably miss the distinction between ethics and physics. Such a deep ground has this error, so willing are men to substitute the speculative for the practical, and to lose the last in the first, that we find even after the Christian faith had been given, a vast attempt to turn even that into a philosophy of nature. What, for example, was Manicheism but the attempt to array a philosophy of nature in a Christian language, to empty Christian truths of all their ethical worth, and then to use them as a gorgeous symbolic garb for clothing a system different to its very core?

Do we find anything like this in the Bible? Not at all. It is no story of the material universe. A single chapter is sufficient to tell us that "God made the heavens and the earth." Man is the central figure there, or, to speak more truly, the *only* figure—sun, moon and stars and all the visible creation borrowing all their worth and their significance from the relations wherein they stand to him. And in this fact, by the way, we have an answer to a certain infidel who lately seemed to think that he had made a point against the Bible by remarking that the author of it had compressed the astronomy of the universe into five words. What ignorance this betrays! In this very reticence in regard to astronomy we have a note of truth. If this work had been the work of some mere cosmogonist,

some theorist as to the origin of the universe, he would have been sure to give us a great deal of information about the stars. But a prophet of the Lord has nothing to do with astronomy as such. All that he has to do with the stars is to make it clear that the most distant orbs of light are included in the domain of the Great Supreme, and this he can do as well in five words as in five thousand, and so, wisely avoiding all detail, he simply says: "He made the stars also."

Here let us look at another *avoidance* in this direction. In Greek and Latin philosophy the heavens were a solid vault over the earth—a sphere studded with stars, as Aristotle called them. The sages of Egypt held that the world was formed by the motion of air and the upward course of flame; Plato, that it was an intelligent being. Empedocles held that there were two suns: Zeucippus, that the stars were kindled by their motions, and that they nourished the sun with their fires. All Eastern nations believed that the heavenly bodies exercised a powerful influence over human affairs. In the Hindoo philosophy the globe is represented as flat and triangular, composed of seven stories, the whole mass being sustained upon the heads of elephants, who, when they shake themselves, cause earthquakes. Mahomet taught that the mountains were created to prevent the earth from moving, and to hold it as by anchors and chains.

#### THE BIBLE'S SPIRITUAL IDEA.

How came it to pass, Sir, that, while every other system of idolatry may be overthrown by its false physics, not one of the forty writers of the Bible, most of whom lived in the vicinity of one or other of the

nations who held these views, has written a single line that favors them? Most instructive are the *avoidances* of the inspired penmen. Nothing is plainer than that they have but one object in view—to restore fallen man to the favor and fellowship of his Maker. They show not even a willingness to turn aside to entertain, or even to instruct, except for a specific purpose. The region of psychology itself is entered by them only so far as is necessary for the attainment of the object with which they feel themselves charged. From all they write it is manifest that they have, individually and without mutual consultation, “This one thing I do,” for their motto. Always and everywhere they hold fast *the spiritual idea*. It runs through their records, as the blood, starting from a common centre, circulates through every portion of the human frame. They aimed to make men “wise unto salvation.” There were storms of discussion raging around these devoted men, and there were billows of earnest inquiry meeting them at every point with tremendous force; but they yielded to neither. They kept the vessel committed to their care moving steadily on, showing that no wind could divert it from its chosen channel, nor any wave harm it by concussion, and that, with all their acknowledged inexperience and apparent weakness, they felt conscious of ability to defy every peril. They entered into no entangling alliances. All history shows how easy it is for religious to pass into political zeal or coalesce with it, especially where men are suffering under oppression and persecution. Hardly had Luther entered on his career than he was troubled with the fanaticism of Carlstadt, and soon after by far worse fanatics, who would have turned the Refor-

mation into an instrument of political revolution, and thereby gravely imperilled his enterprise. But the Evangelists and Apostles aimed at no political ends nor identified themselves with any political party. They lived and moved in a higher and holier atmosphere. They sought to reclaim the world to God. Their hands had found something to do, and they were determined to do it. They felt themselves to be engaged in the greatest and grandest of all works, and would not come down to foreign and feebler pursuits.

Of the great political changes which passed over the ancient world, indeed, the Bible scarcely even takes notice. In regard to them, as has been said, it is almost as silent and unconcerned as sun and stars when they look down upon the tumult and noise of man's battle-fields. We hear, as it were, the sound, but it is as the ocean on a distant shore. The intrigues of courts, the career and achievements of great conquerors, the thrilling events which marked the extinction or transfer of political power and civilization, the great battles which shook the world—in a word, all those things over which the imagination of the ordinary historian lingers with such intense emotion—are touched only as they happen to traverse the religious history of the strange community whose destinies the Bible is tracing, or those ulterior designs of which this people were to be the unconscious instruments to the world.

#### NO RESENTMENT SHOWN BY THE SACRED WRITERS.

The most careless reader of the Bible must have observed that its writers avoided all resentment. Under all the opposition and persecution with which

they met, even in view of the cruel wrongs done to Him whom they called their Master in a far higher sense than any party or sect ever called its founder such, they show none of this feeling. Not even His sufferings, not even His death, could inoculate them with the spirit which is universal in the world, and which, where innocence has to be vindicated and great iniquities to be denounced, is by many regarded not simply as excusable, but meritorious. "The facts, indeed, which they profess to relate (dramatically exhibited after the usual manner of Scripture) determine the moral character of those they describe as agents, but there is no word of indignation or invective such as is the infallible resort of parties in conflict. They call no names, make no clamorous reproaches, indulge neither in curses nor querulous objurgation. Pilate, for example, is represented as afraid of the people, and it is about the worst they have to say of him."

#### GRAVITY OF THE SACRED WRITERS.

Some lecturers against Christianity indulge in strains of levity. They strive to produce merriment and laughter. Even when dealing with themes "high as heaven, and deep as hell" in their importance, their great aim seems to be to "bring down the house." We find no such spirit in the inspired penmen. Paul's, and Peter's, and Stephen's appeals and addresses are not interlarded with announcements of "tremendous cheering," "great applause," "the audience was convulsed with laughter." The reason of this is obvious to any one having a grain of common sense. Such a spirit would have been utterly unbecoming their great

commission to save perishing men. They felt, as all sensible persons feel, that the airy tones of wit and humor in preparing a book for human salvation would be as unnatural as a jocular vein in a judge on the bench of criminal justice, or a physician by the bedside of patients in their mortal agony.

## FOURTH LETTER.

SIR: In one of your lectures, as I have observed, you maintained that, as the Bible gives accounts of immoral actions, it is of an immoral tendency. But how untenable, not to say ridiculous, is such an inference!

A schoolboy ought to know that the Book could not have given a faithful portraiture of human nature without having recorded such actions. Do we say that the mirror is impure and false because it exhibits the distorted features and the crooked frame of some unhappy cripple who may gaze upon it? Not at all. The mirror is pure, the glass is true, but the object reflected happens to be ugly and deformed; hence the deformity is not in the glass but in the subject it represents. Besides, it is one thing for a man when sitting down to write a book which is to contain narratives of depravity to so construct and embellish them as to make them palatable to our corrupt nature; but it is an entirely different thing for a man to describe, as the sacred writers do, the depravity of human nature with a view to deterring men from practising it.

Instead, therefore, of the fact that the Bible records for our admonition the failings and vices of some of the leading characters in it being an argument against the Book, it is evidence of its inspired character. Had the Scriptures been written by cunning impostors



such acknowledgments of crimes and frailties in their most distinguished characters, and even in some of the writers themselves, would clearly not have been made.

Here it is proper to say that, notwithstanding the sad exceptions which are to be found in the character of some of the persons whom the Old Testament recognizes as good—such as Rahab, Samson and Gideon—their goodness is not to be denied. If we contrast them with the Evangelist John, it is enough to say that they did not live in the light of the Gospel. We do not, as has well been said, expect men to see as well at midnight as at noonday. At a period of barbarism and wild anarchy they had a faith in the Invisible, and a fidelity induced by it which have an imperishable worth. They espoused the right side in a conflict on the issue of which was staked the weal of all future generations. The historic movement which they, often in a rough way, but at the cost of peril and sacrifice, helped forward, was in the right direction. Men must be judged in relation to their times. There are paintings produced in the infancy of Art which elicit sympathy for the intent out of which they spring, and for the sentiment beneath them which struggles for expression, though the materials are crude and the execution very imperfect. Thus it is with the moral and religious element that shines out even in the dark ages of Hebrew history. The general aim may be right when the means chosen to reach it are the fruit of an uneducated moral sense. We must approach these ancient records in a catholic spirit, and with the same historic sense that we apply in judging the mediæval crusader or the soldiers of Cromwell.



## WE CAN ONLY JUDGE THE BIBLE BY THE BIBLE.

It is important also to remember just at this point that *it is to the Bible itself we owe our own power of judging the Bible*. The hard places in the Old Testament are revealed by the increasing light of the Bible itself. The Bible is its own commentary and corrective. When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part of itself falls away from the Divine law. "This very fact that we are able to judge the imperfections of the Old Dispensation by a more advanced standard shows how effectually through all these ages of patient education the Spirit of Truth has pursued its work. The conclusive logic of facts shows that the Divine policy of revelation has been successful. The real morality of the Bible is its final morality—the morality in the intention of the Lawgiver from the beginning. The Divineness of the whole process is evident from the very fact that it has taken place. Other nations 'ended as they began ;' no other ancient system of law and religion had in itself a principle of development, a constructive force, the power of passing on to perfection. In its very *evolution* we have a sign of the supernatural life in the religion of Israel. There is the continuity of a Divine purpose here."

With these necessary preliminary remarks, let us, Sir, glance (which is all we deem necessary) at several of the moral difficulties of the Bible, regarding them as specimens of the whole.

## OFFERING OF ISAAC.

As to the case of Abraham's offering of Isaac it is plain that God's design was not to secure a certain *outward act*, but a certain *state of mind*, a willingness to

give up the beloved object to Jehovah. The *principle* of this great trial was the same which has been applied to God's servants in every age—whether they were willing to part with what they loved best on earth when God's service called for it. The direction, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me," shows that satisfaction was rendered to the Lord's command when the *spiritual sacrifice* was completed.

#### JACOB'S DECEPTION.

None need stumble at the deception which Jacob practised upon Isaac, unless they prefer to do so. What was the result of this criminal act? Jacob was driven from his home; was himself robbed and defrauded by Laban; the wife he despised became the mother of the chosen tribe, and in the deception of his own children he learned the grievousness of his sin. Above all, though the promise was ultimately fulfilled, Jacob himself received no blessing from it. Instead of his mother's son bowing down before him, he, in his own person, bowed down before his mother's son, and at the close of his life he was dependent upon his children. To this add all the mournful episode of Joseph's exile, Dinah's dishonor, and his other domestic trials, and there is no difficulty in seeing that the punishment was complete, as is the lesson also.

#### PROPHETESS DEBORAH.

In reference to the Prophetess Deborah's approval of the conduct of Jael in treacherously slaying Sisera, whom she had decoyed into her tent, there has been

great complaint by infidels. But why should there be? The motive of the act was a high and unselfish one. The deed which sprung from it was wrong, though ignorantly done. If we can overlook the treachery and violence which belonged to the morals of the age and country, and bear in mind Jael's ardent sympathies with the oppressed people of God, her faith in the right of Israel to possess the land in which they were now slaves, her zeal for the glory of Jehovah as against the gods of Canaan, and the heroic courage and firmness with which she executed her deadly purpose, we shall be ready to yield her the praise which is her due. Deborah speaks of Jael's deed by the light of her own age, which did not make so manifest the evil of guile and bloodshed as the light in ours does. What shall be said in the light of the Gospel of Deborah's applause of Jael? It is merited if applied to the motive; it is misplaced when directed to the act.

#### THE SINS OF FATHERS VISITED UPON THE CHILDREN.

Objection has been made to the *visiting of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, in the second commandment of the Decalogue. Some consider this threatening as peculiar to the Jews, who were placed under a dispensation of temporal rewards and punishments, and understand it to import that under such a dispensation, by the overruling providence of God, a man's family would be placed in such circumstances as would accord with his conduct, or that their degradation and suffering would be the effect of his sins. "A nobleman," says Dr. Cumming, "rebels against his prince, he loses his coronet, and his family suffers for centuries afterward. A father, through gambling,

loses all his property, and his children and his children's children suffer. A parent becomes a drunkard and a debauchée, wastes his health and injures his constitution, and his offspring are diseased to the third and fourth generation. Now, what is all this but *the sins of the fathers visited upon the children* in the arrangements of a Providence we can see, and in occurrences of daily life?

#### JEPHTHAH'S VOW.

As to Jephthah's supposed sacrifice of his daughter, it may be said: *First. It cannot be proved that he did offer her as a burnt-offering.* The Bible does not say that he did this. If, through ignorance and a misguided fanaticism, he actually committed the cruel deed, *it does not appear that God in any manner sanctioned it.* *Secondly.* There are good reasons for holding, with the most eminent critics, that, instead of being offered as a burnt sacrifice, she was simply devoted to perpetual celibacy in the service of the tabernacle. 1. The literal sacrifice of human beings was strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law, and Jephthah was doubtless fully aware of this fact. 2. The Hebrew of Jephthah's vow may be correctly translated: "Shall surely be the Lord's *or* (some eminent scholars prefer *and*), I will offer it up for a burnt-offering." Either of these translations removes the difficulty. 3. During the "two months" which intervened between Jephthah's return and the supposed sacrifice, it is scarcely credible that the priests would not have interfered to prevent the barbarous deed, or that Jephthah himself would not have "inquired of the Lord" respecting a release from his vow. 4. As she was Jephthah's only child,

to devote her to perpetual virginity would preclude him from all hope of posterity, *in the estimation of a Jew a most humiliating and calamitous deprivation.* 5. The phraseology of verses 37-40 points clearly to a life of perpetual and enforced celibacy. On any other hypothesis the language seems irrelevant and unmeaning. Manifestly, completeness of consecration as a spiritual sacrifice was the pervading idea in the case of Jephthah's sacrifice.

## DAVID.

In relation to David, infidelity has asked with a flush of triumph, How is it that he is represented as "a man after God's own heart," and that his heart is said to have been "perfect with the Lord his God?" But it is well to remember that the former commendation refers to him *early in life*, before he had fallen into those great sins which cast such a shadow upon his administration, and that the latter is not absolute, but comparative, merely indicating a man whom God will approve in distinction from Saul, who was rejected. Neither should it be forgotten that David's repentance was as deep and thorough as his sins were flagrant and aggravated, and that his iniquity was visited with sore punishment, his favorite son Absalom rising up in rebellion against him, driving him from his throne and capital, involving his people in the horrors of civil war, and, in pursuit of his detestable policy, visiting on his father, and "in the face of the sun," the dishonor, and worse than the dishonor, which he had brought into the house of Uriah. Hear what Mr. Carlyle says on this subject: "David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of

sin. And, therefore, unbelievers sneer and ask, 'Is this your man according to God's heart?' The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? . . . David's life and history, as written for us in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given us of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discover in it the faithful struggle of one earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled—sore baffled—driven as into entire wreck, yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable purpose, begun anew."

#### THE SUN STANDING STILL.

The miracle of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua has been greatly cavilled at by infidels, but certainly without sufficient reason. This miracle was known to those of old who had no means of access to the divine writings. We find the event mythologically related, and there is not one system of belief, of which astronomical observations have formed a part, in which this "long day" has not been noticed.

The answer to the objection that Joshua commanded the "*sun*" instead of the "*earth*" to stand still, is obvious. The Scriptures generally speak in *popular* and not in *scientific* language. Written under the guidance of a more than human wisdom, and freighted by the providence of God with truth for the illumination and redemption of mankind, they waste none of their power in teaching geography, astronomy, or philoso-



phy, but employ on all these subjects the current speech and method of their times. Thus they speak of the sun's *rising* and *setting*, of the *ends* of the earth, of passing from one *end* of heaven to another, etc. Indeed, it was only in this way that Joshua could have conveyed any clear idea to the people of what he intended to express by the command. Had he uttered the words, "Earth, stand thou still upon thine axis," they would have thought him absolutely distracted. He spoke therefore in the common, popular style adopted by philosophers themselves in ordinary discourse, and every one can see that it was obviously the proper mode. Nor can any one object to this diction in the sacred writers without virtually entering his protest against the every-day language of all enlightened countries on the earth. Whether, therefore, the sun or the globe be supposed to have been arrested in its course on this occasion is immaterial to the truth of the narrative, as the *appearance* in each case would be the same.

Some eminent scholars maintain, that the phenomenon related was merely *optical*; that the rotatory motion of the earth was not disturbed, but that instead of this the light of the sun and moon was supernaturally prolonged by the same laws of refraction and reflection that ordinarily cause the sun to appear *above* the horizon when he is in reality *below* it. And as this would of course have had all the *visible effect* of actually bringing the earth to a pause in its revolution round its axis, and as this, in their opinion, answers all the demands of the text, it is not necessary to seek any more satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

We prefer, however, to adhere to the ordinary in-

terpretation—that the sun slackened its *apparent* motion, or, that the earth slackened its *actual* motion in obedience to the command given—bearing in mind, at the same time, that this cessation was not *sudden*, but *gradual*, according to the record that the sun “*hasted not to go down for a whole day.*” The fact is, that in arguing against this miracle, objectors argue altogether from the wrong stand-point. A mischievous boy may by interfering with a single wheel disturb or ruin an elaborate machine. For as he has no comprehensive acquaintance with the whole, he is unable to compensate for the power he suspends. But are we to suppose that He who arranged every part of the universal frame, and gave to each its important office, fitting it so nicely into its relative position—that He, if He touches one point, forgets or has no power over the rest? It is monstrous to suppose that if the Deity stayed the earth’s revolution He would not by the same exertion of His power provide against the ruin that would doubtless have ensued if the machine were stopped by a human hand. The word that could produce the one effect could as well produce the other. We may freely acknowledge that there will be no needless expenditure of power; but yet hard and easy, it cannot be too frequently repeated, have no application to the doings of an Omnipotent hand.

“Thou beckonest, Almighty! from the tree  
The blossom’s leaf doth fall,—  
Thou beckonest, and in immensity  
Is quenched a solar ball.”



## HARDENING MEN'S HEARTS.

It is objected that God is represented in the Scriptures as hardening men's hearts. The answer to this is, the rejection of truth and the abuse of blessings tend ever to "harden the heart." God, therefore, by making known His truth and by bestowing His blessings, only indirectly hardens men's hearts; that is, furnishes occasion for their hardening. Thus, the Divine mercy to Pharaoh in the withdrawal of the plagues at his request became the occasion of increasing his hardness, as he perverted the favor conferred and abused the grace of God. So it is ever. The sun, by the force of its heat, moistens the wax and dries the clay, softening the one and hardening the other; and, as this produces opposite effects by the same power, so, through the long-suffering of God, which reaches to all, some receive good and others evil, some are softened and others hardened. We see examples of this truth continually.

## SLAUGHTER OF THE CANAANITES.

Another difficulty has been found in the slaughter of the Canaanites. "Appalling as such a fact is, and incomprehensible as it must *a priori* be, yet, so far as the moral government of God is concerned, it is no more appalling in the effects nor quite so incomprehensible in character as those things which we are compelled to say He does or permits to be done in His ordinary administration of the world. The devastations of pestilence, earthquake, famine, involving guilt and innocence, age and infancy in the same indiscriminate ruin, are just as awful and equally mysterious, while they are hardly so incomprehensible, because we

are assured that in the case of the Canaanites the visitation was *judicial*; that their iniquity had been long borne with, and that "its measure was now full;" that such was the grossness of all unutterable crimes with which they were tainted that, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, something little short of extirpation was the only remedy. Besides, as the people of those ages were affected by no proof of the power of the gods which they worshipped, so deeply, as by giving them victory in war, there was a propriety in ordering that the extermination of the Canaanites, which might have been accomplished by a pestilence, fire or earthquake, should be effected by the Israelites, as mere instruments in the hands of a righteous Providence, inasmuch as this was the clearest and most intelligible method of displaying the power and righteousness of the God of Israel, His power over the pretended gods of other nations, and His righteous hatred of the crimes into which they had fallen.

#### IMPRECATORY PSALMS.

It is alleged by the enemies of the Bible that what are called the "imprecatory psalms" are immoral and unchristian in spirit and intention. But this is not true. These psalms were chanted by the Hebrew king, not as the expression of his personal sentiments toward his enemies, or those of the Lord, but in his character as the type of Christ, the Judge of men. They do not necessarily imply any private revenge or ill will. They lie in the sphere of governmental relations; they cover the claims of justice, the necessities of righteous rule; they pray that wickedness may not triumph—that it may be overthrown; they rejoice be-

nevolently in anticipating its most signal and thorough discomfiture; they covet the extirpation of wrong, and oppression, and deceit, root and branch, trunk and leaf—that the Doegs and Ahithophels of all lands and days may be made as the stubble and ground fine as the dust. There is no contradiction in asking for this and in giving thanks for this, with a true pity for their fate and an honest “would to God” that it had not been needed. The closing expression of one of these psalms—“And men shall know that Thou, whose name is Jehovah, art alone most high over all the earth”—shows the real mind and heart of the writer. It is a God-fearing piety which inspires and controls him.

#### WARS AND PERSECUTIONS.

I can only further notice, Sir, the charge of infidels that wars and persecutions are ascribable to the influence of Christianity. How baseless is such an allegation! Is there any tendency in the principles of the Gospel to the enkindling of strife, hatred, war or bloodshed? Was the character of its Founder, were the characters of the Apostles and primitive Christians, among whom the native influence of Christianity was most unequivocally exhibited, in any manner indicative of such a tendency in its principles? Is not the whole history of the purest ages of the Gospel, as well as every page in the New Testament, directly in proof of the very opposite effect? Did not all the evils of war and national dissension prevail much more universally before the establishment of Christianity than they have done since? Is not the influence of this religion plainly visible in mitigating those horrors of war which she has not exterminated? And as to

those which have continued to subsist, are they in direct consequence, or *in spite* of her influence, the fruit of the tree or the poisonous weeds at its root, which oppose its growth?

If persecutions were of the spirit of Christianity, where *this* most prevails *that* would most abound. But the reverse is notoriously true. Religious wars have uniformly resulted from the acts and motives of unchristian men, who, becoming tyrants over the souls and bodies of their fellows, have erected stakes and gibbets and founded dungeons. Isolated instances, indeed, may be found, when, under the influence of evil examples and depraved public sentiment, or driven by oppression, men of undoubted Christian principle have turned aside from rectitude in these respects; but persecution and every harsh and cruel mode of propagating Christianity have ever been condemned by those who, in every age, have enjoyed the best reputation as Christians, and the Bible not only does not teach but most expressly denounces such practices.

## FIFTH LETTER.

SIR : Let us continue the consideration of objections urged by infidels against the Bible.

### MYSTERIES.

There is, I maintain, no force in the objection that some parts of the Scriptures are mysteries. Mysteries meet us on every side. The animal world is full of them. The problem of animal life is to this day as mysterious and unsolved, and probably insoluble, as it ever was. Pathology, the doctrine of disease, is as dark to this hour as any doctrine in theology. The vegetable world is full of mystery. There is not a flower or blade of grass that has not in it more mystery than all the wise men in the world can remove. The mineral world is full of mystery. Scarcely a stone can we take up but it presents to us the inexplicable marvels either of chemical affinity or of crystallization. The anatomist, with all his discoveries, cannot tell us how mind and matter are united, and exercise power over each other. Nor can the astronomer, though he calculates with such wonderful accuracy the motions of the heavenly bodies, explain upon what all these motions rest. How unreasonable, then, is it to object to the Bible, because mysteries are found in portions of it! If there were *no* mysteries, would not their *absence* be as valid a ground of objection as their *pres-*

ence is? If a book professing to come from the infinite God could all be grasped by man's finite understanding, would not this very fact prove that the volume wanted the signs most elementary of a heavenly origin? Besides, it is perfectly plain that for any one to insist upon a Revelation which would not only tell us that such and such things are, but also explain *how they are*, is actually to declare no Revelation to be necessary at all, for if Reason could follow such a Revelation, why might she not have risen herself to the same region to which she has shown herself able to follow; and in such a case, of course, there would be no necessity at all for the Revelation, for all the topics on which it would undertake to give light were previously within Reason's reach. Her power to understand them would show that she had power to discover them.

The truth is, Sir, as any one can see, who *wishes* to see it, that the Bible by its very mysteriousness is adapted to accomplish its purpose. "It is wisely fitted for the *formation of character*. It is a revelation clear enough to render faith possible, and obscure enough to leave unbelief possible. It affords thus a trial or test of character. It searches the heart. Too bright as well as too dark a revelation might defeat the very end of revelation. It would bring the educational and probationary period of life to a close; it would bring on the day of judgment. The very difficulties and limitations of revelation are adapted also to the conditions of moral growth. It requires and it repays toil. It tasks and tries and puzzles and strengthens faith. It is like man to make everything regular, easy, and plain, but that is not like the God of nature, of his-

tory, or of the Bible. A revelation in which the way never could be missed, a revelation made level and smooth to our feet, would be like the work of man, but not like the builder of the mountains. Were there no Alps for men to climb, no ocean depths beneath the plummet's reach, no stars still unresolved, no Scylla and Charybdis waiting to catch up the unskilful voyager, no burdens of toil and sorrow laid upon our manhood, if this life were only the play of children, and all the days were sunshine, then, indeed, might we expect to find a Bible without difficulties, a Gospel without parables, a kingdom of truth without tasks for the athlete, and without rewards for the victor. But the God of nature, of history, and of the Bible, surely does not intend to people his heaven with a race of moral imbeciles. "To him that overcometh," is the promise—seven times repeated—of "the crown of life."

"The Word of God," as an ancient writer well says, "is bread that nourishes some, and a sword that pierces others. It is the odor of life to them who live by faith and die sincerely to themselves, and it is the odor of death to those who are alienated from God, and live shut up in themselves by pride. In it God has so mixed light and shade that the humble and docile find there nothing but truth and comfort, whilst the indocile and presumptuous find nothing but error and incredulity. All the difficulties immediately vanish when the mind is cured of presumption; then, according to the rule of Augustine, we pass over all we do not understand, and are edified at what we do understand."

#### DISCREPANCIES.

In relation to the discrepancies of the Bible, at



which sceptics so much cavil, Dr. Charles Hodge says: "These discrepancies are for the most part trivial, relating in most cases to numbers or dates. The great majority of them are only apparent, and yield to careful examination. Many of them may be fairly ascribed to errors of transcribers. The marvel and the miracle is, that there are so few of any real importance. Considering that the different books of the Bible were written not only by different authors, but by men of all degrees of culture, living in the course of fifteen hundred or two thousand years, it is altogether unaccountable that they should agree perfectly on any other hypothesis than that the writers were under the guidance of the Spirit of God. In this respect, as in all others, the Bible stands alone. . . . The errors in matters of fact which sceptics search out bear no proportion to the whole. No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in the structure."

#### LIMITED DIFFUSION.

Is it a valid objection to the Bible, that it is limited in the extent of its diffusion? We maintain that it is not. "The Divine procedure for man's spiritual welfare seems conducted on the principle by which that for his temporal welfare has been made. God has provided in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms a great variety of medicines, and has furnished the vast storehouse of nature with materials for the various useful arts, which contribute to our safety, convenience and comfort. He has also endowed us with the physical and mental faculties by which we may make these provisions available. Yet we find that in His provi-



dence, long periods have elapsed before some very important remedies and valuable discoveries in the sciences and arts have become known to man. Thousands are still unaffected by them. Owing to indolence, and ignorance, prejudice and passion, it has often been only after long labor, unsuccessful experiments, contempt, disputes, divisions, controversies, doubts and rejections, that some of them have obtained reception and success. Many who greatly need them cannot be brought to appreciate them. To millions they are never offered. Others again derive no benefit from them on account of some circumstances which countervail their effects. In short, we thus see that these provisions are neither certain, perfect nor universal. So has been the course of Providence in respect of a revelation."

#### ASTRONOMICAL OBJECTION.

It has been alleged as improbable in view of the vastness of creation, that God would redeem, by the sacrifice of His Son, the inhabitants of so small a portion of His dominions as our earth. To this it may be replied, that we only know the effects of the redemption by Christ *so far as it relates to ourselves*. We cannot tell how widely its blessings may extend. For anything we know to the contrary, there is not a world in existence that does not derive incalculable advantages from the sacrifice of Calvary, not one corner of creation where its effects are not felt, and that for good. Such an argument, therefore, does not throw any cloud over divine revelation, nor has it any power to shake our faith in the verity of the Christian dispensation. It is enough for us to know, that if there be, as we see there *is*, a contest going on between

the powers of good and evil, those powers must have some ground whereupon the battle between them may be fought, and that it is not of any consequence, compared with the importance of the interests at stake, *where* the contest shall take place, or how seemingly insignificant may be the spot on which the strife shall find its arena. It is, indeed, the veriest folly, to object to the Bible because it ascribes an importance to our earth which geography does not, and, because it makes our world the Thermopylæ of the universe, to flaunt this in the faces of the friends of Revelation, as a mark of superior wisdom and scientific culture.

Dr. Arnott thus conclusively disposes of the objection in question. This phase of unbelief is refuted by the necessary attributes of God and by the written revelation of His will. What relation, capable of being appreciated or calculated, subsists between material bulk and moral character? The question between great and small is totally distinct from the question between good and evil. Number and extension cannot exercise or illustrate the moral character either of God or man. We should ourselves despise the mischievous caprice which should give to the biggest man in the city the honors that are due to the best. Right and wrong are matters that move on other lines and at higher levels than great and small, before both human tribunals and divine.

There is, perhaps, as much reason for saying that this earth is too *large*, as for saying that it is too *small*, for being the scene of God's greatest work. The telescope has opened a long receding vista of wonders, where the observer is lost in the abyss of distance and magnitude, the microscope has opened another long

receding vista of wonders, where the observer is lost in the abyss of nearness and minuteness equally beyond his reach. Between the great and the small, who shall determine and prescribe the centre-point equidistant from both extremes, which the Infinite ought to have chosen as a theatre for the display of His greatest glory?

In the divine government generally, as well as in revealed religion particularly, the aim is not to choose the widest stage, but on any stage that may be chosen to execute the Creator's purpose, and achieve the creature's good. A battle is fought, an enemy crushed, and a kingdom won on some remote and barren moor: no man suggests, by way of challenging the authenticity of the record, that a conflict waged between hosts so powerful, and involving interests so momentous, could not have taken place on an insignificant spot, while the continent contained many larger and more fertile plains: neither can the loss incurred by the sin of men, and the gain gotten by the redemption of Christ, be measured by the size of the world in which the events emerged. It is enough that here the first Adam fell and the Second Adam triumphed, that here evil overcame good, and good in turn overcame evil. There was room on this earth for Eden and for Calvary; this globe supplies the fulcrum whereon all God's government leans. The Redeemer came not to the largest world, but to the lost world. Even so, Father."

#### DIVISIONS OF CHRISTIANS.

The variety of opinion which exists among adherents of the Bible, as to its teachings, has been a

stumbling-stone to many, but, evidently, without any necessity. The divisions of Christians, as has been well said, are no more, nor more important, than reasoning from other things, we might presume. Laws and constitutions, though carefully drawn by the wisest men, education, medicine, agriculture, natural and moral science, and even mathematics, are all subjects on which, either as to their principles, modes of exhibition or application, great diversity of opinion exists. And it is observable, that the acrimony, zeal and pertinacity which are evinced by sectaries, are usually in the direct ratio of the general importance of a subject, or the inverse ratio of that of its specialities. But no one pretends that division or controversy implies that its subject is one of doubt or uncertainty, or that any system is responsible for the variety of opinions of which it is the occasion. This is more frequently owing to the influence of extrinsic causes.

Then, again, it must not be forgotten that there is more agreement among Christians on the *fundamental* propositions of Christianity, than can be found among the adherents of any other system of moral truth. Not one in ten thousand but will say that they teach an intense sinfulness of men, the necessity of regeneration by a Divine power, an atonement for sin in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and one way of appropriating that atonement by repentance and faith. Through Christendom fundamental differences of creed are the exception. They are an almost inappreciable part of the whole sum of religious differences about us. What makes such outcry and strife of dispute is chiefly the mint, anise and cumin of theology rather than its paschal lamb.

## SIXTH LETTER.

SIR: The literary excellence of the Bible has elicited the strongest expressions of admiration from men of splendid talents and profound erudition. "The sublimity of the Bible's language," says the eloquent *Judson*, "caps the climax of rhetoric. . . . Its delineations, in precision, fulness and force of description, far exceed the boldest strokes and finest touches of the master-spirits of every age and clime. . . . As a book of poetry and eloquence it stands in lofty grandeur, towering above the noblest productions of the most brilliant talents that have illuminated and enraptured the classic world." "It is," said that eminent orator, *William Wirt*, "the only universal classic—the classic of all mankind, of every age and country, of time and eternity; humble and simple as the primer of the child, grand and magnificent as the epic and the oration, the ode and the drama, when genius, with his chariot of fire and his horses of fire, ascends in a whirlwind into the heaven of his own invention." *Fisher Ames*, the distinguished statesman and orator, was accustomed to say: "I will hazard the assertion that no man ever did or ever will become truly eloquent without being a constant reader of the Bible and an admirer of the purity and sublimity of its language." "I call the Book of Job," says *Carlyle*, "apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with a pen. A noble

book ! All men's book ! Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation, oldest choral melody—as of the heart of mankind—so soft and great, as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars ! There is nothing written, I think, of equal literary merit.”

How easy it is to confirm such tributes by a glance at the Book which they extol !

#### HISTORICAL COMPOSITIONS.

Look at the Bible's *historical compositions*. They are the most simple, natural, affecting and well-told narratives in the world. Witness the history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his family—the recapitulations of Deuteronomy—the narratives of Ezra and Nehemiah—the story of the Saviour's trial and crucifixion, and the life of the Apostle Paul. For fidelity and impartiality, for unvarnished truth, for the choice of its matter, its unity, its concise and graphic descriptions of character, and, above all, its *usefulness*, the historical parts of this book are without a parallel. No critic can say of them : “ They are too monotonous, too wordy, or too uniformly stately, tragical and emphatic.” The characters walk and breathe. They are nature, and nothing but nature. By a single stroke of the pencil we often have their portrait. We see them. We hear them. Every scene in which we behold them is a fit subject for the painter. Nor should it be forgotten that the finest subjects for historic painting within the circle of the fine arts have been selected from the Scriptures.

#### ORATORY.

Look at the Bible's *oratory*. Where can our eyes



fall upon a finer piece of pleading than is furnished in the speech of Judah to Joseph, when he and his brethren had been brought back to Egypt by the stratagem of putting a silver cup into Benjamin's sack? or a greater display of genuine eloquence than we have in the defence of Paul as he stood at the tribunal of Agrippa a prisoner in chains but a fearless freeman of the Lord?

## LACONIC MAXIMS.

Look at its *laconic maxims* and rules for direction in private, social, domestic and public life. What collection of these, not excepting the golden verses of Pythagoras themselves, equal the Proverbs of Solomon, which Gibbon admitted display a larger compass of thought and experience than he supposed to belong either to a Jew or a king?

## PARABLES.

Look at its *parables*. What could be superior, of this kind, to Jotham's of the trees, Nathan's of the ewe-lamb, and those which Jesus spake—the picture of the good Samaritan, and the description of the unhappy Prodigal—those perfect gems, with their beautiful proportions and admirable delicacy of truth and coloring—masterpieces which need no illustration, and which additions would only encumber?

## NARRATIVES.

Does a simple *story* interest us? What could be more beautiful than that one bearing the name of the youthful Moabitess, in which the widowed distress of Naomi, her affectionate concern for her daughters, the reluctant departure of Orpah, the dutiful attachment

of Ruth and the sorrowful return to Bethlehem, are so touchingly delineated?

#### INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL.

As to *incidents of travel*, what reader of taste and feeling, who has followed the much enduring hero of the Odyssey with growing delight and increasing sympathy, though in a work of fiction, through all his wanderings, can peruse with inferior interest the genuine voyages of the Apostle of the Gentiles over nearly the same seas?

#### POETRY.

As for *poetry*, where are tragic strains so mournful and tender as the lamentations of Jeremiah, or of David over Saul and Jonathan? What could exceed the music of the song of Amoz sweeping the chords to the glory of the holy city? And what can be compared with Ezekiel's prediction of the destruction of Egypt, or the Psalmist's representation of God's ubiquity—"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there! If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me."

#### AID IN THE PRODUCTION OF LITERATURE.

Not only, Sir, does the Bible contain unequalled specimens of poetry, but it has also rendered important aid in the production of those of human origin which have been most universally admired. Shakspeare, Byron and Southey are not a little indebted to it for



some of their best scenes and inspirations, and "Cotter's Saturday Night," of Burns, is due to its suggestive influence. And had it not been for the sacred associations which it has thrown around Zion and Olivet, Siloam and Calvary, Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered" would not have appeared. Neither without its influence would "Paradise Lost" have seen the light, nor the "Night Thoughts," the "Task" and the "Seasons" have been, what Montgomery has declared they are, the only universally and permanently popular long poems in the English language; for the first three of them, as will be recollected, are decidedly religious in their character, and the last owes its principal charm to the pure and elevated spirit of devotion which it occasionally breathes.

It was at this sacred fountain, mainly, that the authors of these celebrated productions had their fancy enriched with its brilliant treasures. Here Milton received the light which has rendered him superior in majesty of thought and splendor of expression to earth's brightest luminaries; here Young lit up the fires of his immortal muse; here Cowper learned to anticipate the millennial blessedness; here Thomson derived much of his excellence, especially in the preparation of his supremely admirable hymn; and here, it may be added, Pope was taught to write of the "Messiah" in a manner which eclipses all his original productions in combined elevation of thought, affluence of imagery, beauty of diction and fervency of spirit.

#### INFLUENCE ON PHILOSOPHY.

As to the influence of the Bible on *philosophy*, every one knows who is conversant with the subject it was

from the day in which this venerable volume was brought forth from the darkness under which scholasticism had covered it, and became a new and pervading element of thought in the intellect of nations which were blessed with its light, that we find philosophy and science assuming their new guise and making strides unknown before. As has well been observed, we hear of no Copernicus, nor Tycho Brahe, or Kepler, or Galileo, till we have heard of a Luther, a Zwingli, and a Calvin. It is true, indeed, that we may occasionally find some distinguished philosopher in lands where the Bible was comparatively a sealed book, but, if so, we see him in a constant antagonism with the darkness around him. He is like a star that dwells alone. He is not one of a bright constellation. The sky in which we discover him is not congenial to the display of kindred lights. If we would behold a firmament where such luminaries rise and shine in clusters, giving and receiving from each other the lustre which creates perfect day, and where their influence is felt in a philosophy that reaches high and deep into the treasures of nature, and brings forth her choicest gifts for the benefit of man, we must find it where the Word of God circulates as free as the air we breathe, where its truth shines unchecked and untrammelled as light from the heavens. We do not find Bacons, Boyles, Newtons, Davys, Herschels, or Professor Henrys in heathen lands or in Spain, Portugal, or Italy, but in countries such as England, Scotland, and America, over which the Scriptures pour their effulgence.

PRESIDENT HOPKINS' OPINION.

In addition to the attractive literary aspects of the

Bible mention must be made of the prodigious literature which it has evoked. "No book," says President Hopkins, "not nature itself, has ever waked up intellectual activity like the Bible. On the battle-field of truth it has ever been around this that the conflict has raged. What book, besides, ever caused the writing of so many other books? Take from the libraries of Christendom all those which have sprung (I will not say indirectly, but directly) from it—those written to oppose, or defend, or elucidate it—and how would they be diminished! The very multitude of infidel books is a witness to the power with which the Bible stimulates the intellect. Why do we not see the same amount of active intellect coming up and dashing and roaring around the Koran?"

Such, Sir, is a mere glance at the literary excellence of the Bible. It has stirred the intellect of the world. It is the repository of noble thoughts, the originator of splendid imagery, the oracle of soundest wisdom. Wherever possessed it has fostered the spirit of learning in all its varied departments, and promoted general intelligence among the mass of the people. It is the grand text-book of the true student. It sparkles with brilliance, it blazes with beauty, and it breathes the spirit of liberty. Let this Book and its influences, direct and indirect, be blotted out of existence, and at once the sun that illuminates our literary heavens is extinguished, and the strength of our whole literature is impaired and its beauty marred.

#### A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED.

Here, then, is a problem to be solved. How came this Book to have this wonderful character? What

could have given its writers such transcendent power of thought and expression? What could have given the land of the Hebrews such a distinguished pre-eminence in these grand attributes? What could have rendered her such a culminating point of intellect? How comes it to pass that such a vast storehouse of thought, intelligence and taste should be found in her of which we have no trace in any nation preceding her, and from which the cultivated taste of subsequent nations borrowed so liberally? No proof is needed that though the banks of Jordan were as green and the cedars of Lebanon were as lofty when the land was peopled by the Hittite, the Amorite and the Perizzite as when ruled under the sceptre of the Hebrew kings, yet while those nations held it from border to border, "darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people," both in mind and morals. How, then, came the downward tendency of the human mind, which at that time existed, to be arrested and reversed among the nation of the Hebrews? The only answer that can be given to these inquiries is, that the Most High selected that people as a fresh depository of knowledge from Himself, and having planted them in the land promised to their fathers, by direct inspiration made them acquainted with His being, His attributes, His will and His works. There is no explanation, either in fact or philosophy, to account for the uprising and recovery of the human intellect from its former lethargy which then took place, and which has since diffused its influence through the world, unless we ascribe it to the revealed will of Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

## WHAT AN ABLE WRITER SAYS.

“Whence *is* it,” says an able writer, “that the herdsmen and fishermen and tentmakers of Judea have given a Book to the world which is so superior to all the productions of human genius and learning, so undivided and unique in its object, and in its design so unutterably grand and elevated? *What* presiding genius, *what* master mind was it that controlled and propelled them at every step? If the greatness of the cause may be ascertained from the greatness of the effect, is not this Book, as a mere intellectual effort, inexplicable upon any other supposition than that it is of Divine origin? Does not the light that emanates from these pages proceed from the great Fountain and eternal source of knowledge? Is it not the production of the Infinite Mind? Is it not impossible that it should have been the result of human invention? Is it not utterly beyond the grasp of man? Has it not an elevation of thought, a vigor, an extent, a greatness of conception which makes the proudest efforts of human genius melt away like an untimely birth, and which bears on the face of it the intelligence and signature of Heaven?”

In this connection it may be proper to advert again to the impossibility of the Bible's being the work of imposture. Its very literary structure proves this. Take the Old Testament for illustration. What diversity in language and expression! Isaiah does not write like Moses, nor Jeremiah like Ezekiel, and between these and each of the Minor Prophets, as relates to style, there is a great gulf fixed. The grammatical structure of language in the books of Moses contains provincialisms; Isaiah moulds common words into

new forms ; Jeremiah and Ezekiel abound in Chaldaisms. Then what diversity in the march of thought and range of imagery ! The strong strokes which Moses gives to the stringed instrument yield to the soft intonations of David, as he strays along rivulets and banks, over plains, and among flocks and herds. One poet is original, as Isaiah, Joel, and Habakkuk ; another imitative, as Ezekiel. One wanders the untrodden path of genius, while at his side another travels on the footway of unadorned truth. There is nowhere a sudden transition, but throughout a gradual progression. One writer supposes the existence of another. How, then, could *one* impostor have forged such writings ? Or how could *several* impostors, in a later century, even if we could imagine them making common cause for such a purpose, have forged these writings ? How was it possible for them to do this in a manner so conformable to the progress of the human mind ?



## SEVENTH LETTER.

SIR: It is really surprising with what confidence and courage men like yourself, who claim superior wisdom in the realm of science, will hurl their discoveries at the volume of Revelation, just as if these discoveries were final and certain, instead of being, as they at least are, doubtful in their character.

### DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE UNCERTAIN.

The *past* has a lesson for us on this subject. For example, erroneous and intrinsically absurd as was the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, it was for some 1400 years the accepted astronomical science, and it is but 250 years since Galileo, under threatened penalty for maintaining an "awful heresy," was compelled to "abjure, rail at, and abominate" the Copernican system which affirmed, what everybody now believes, that the earth revolves around the sun. So with *light*. From Newton's time up to within less than a century, the emanation or corpuscular theory respecting light, taught as it was by that prince of philosophers, was universally believed to be a scientific verity, and every scholar in Optics was made to believe that vision was ascribable to a ceaseless emission of luminiferous matter from the sun and other luminous bodies, and the striking of this matter against our visual organs. It was under this theory that the question was often



sneeringly asked: "How is it that the Bible represents light as existing before the sun and moon were created?" And yet how changed the views of scientists *now*! Humboldt, Wagner, Schubert, Agassiz and Guyot have shown that light exists independently of the sun, and results from *molecular action or combination*. Hence the command "Light be" was simply another way of saying: "Let molecular action begin," whereupon light was at once evolved. And thus, as Professor Dana says, "at last, through modern scientific researches, we learn that the appearance of light on the first day and of the sun on the fourth—an idea foreign to man's unaided conceptions—is as much in the volume of nature as that of sacred writ."

In addition to the lesson of the *past* let us not overlook the *present* unsettled state of science. Voltaire said, in his scoffing mood, of the theories of creation which came under his notice: "Philosophers put themselves without ceremony in the place of God, and destroy and renew the world after their own fashion." How applicable is the spirit of this remark to many modern scientists! How widely they differ from each other! Lamark, for example, held to spontaneous generation. The author of the book, "*Vestiges of Creation*," so celebrated thirty years ago, but utterly fallen out of the popular notice to-day, took even more extreme views. Darwin denounces both. Huxley is at sword's point with Darwin on the question of a Creator who breathed life at first into one or more beings. Wallace insists that Darwin's great doctrine of natural selection is not proven, and if proven would be entirely inadequate to account for the origin of man. Owen contends for the physical unity of the race, and

Agassiz, while granting the *moral* unity of the race, contends for different pairs in different geographical centres. Herbert Spencer denounces all the rest of the scientists, deeming his theory about force sufficient to account for the world as it is, and for the origin of the human race; while Miller, Dana and Guyot—names that equal any—hold most zealously to the theory of one human pair, and on scientific grounds indorse the Scripture statements as to the origin of the race. So with the theories of eminent geologists—say, for instance, on the question of the age of the earth. They differ from each other by tens of thousands of years. The very last deliverances of scientists in this direction are most significant—that of the President of the British Association and that of the Vice-President of the American Academy of Natural Sciences—both of whom have admitted it to be the prevailing feeling of the geologists that the “whole foundation of theoretic geology must be reconstructed.” Is it not true, then, that science is unsettled, and that until it can assert definite and acknowledged conclusions it is premature to demand a reconciliation between it and Revelation?

#### PROFESSOR VIRCHOW'S OPINION.

Dr. Rudolph Virchow, the eminent Professor of Pathology, of Berlin, said: “All attempts to transform our problems into doctrines, to introduce our theories as the basis of a plan of education—particularly the attempt simply to depose the Church and to replace its dogma by a religion of descent—these attempts, I say, must fail. Therefore let us be moderate, let us exercise resignation, so that we give even the most treasured problems which we put forth always as prob-

lems only. . . Do not take this for confirmed truth, be prepared that this may perhaps be changed, only for the moment we are of opinion *that it may be true.*" Such counsel from such a source should be heeded. The sands of time are strewn with the wrecks of scientific fancies which have sprung up from the teeming brains of men who boast of their learning and ability, but which have perished forever like the shadowy phantoms of the night. Christian men have no quarrel with the facts of science. But when men shift their position from year to year, when theories which can hardly stand without propping, and over which scientists themselves wrangle and dispute and show no signs of coming to an agreement, are pressed upon us as authoritative, with all the marks of infallibility which distinguished the ages of darkness that are passed, we beg to be excused from accepting theories so crude or statements so feebly sustained. A volley of boiled peas will not batter down the fortress of Gibraltar, nor will the explosion of a firecracker overturn the everlasting hills; and it will require more than the mere theorizing of a man who claims that he has descended from a monkey to expel the Almighty God from the universe which He has made, or hush the voice of the heavens which declare His glory, or the throbbings of the countless loyal hearts that are filled and strengthened by His grace and love.

#### AN INFIDEL OBJECTION.

It is urged by infidels against the Bible that "a perfect volume should be perfect in its science." But how futile is this objection! It is natural, and even necessary, that the records of a revelation should employ the

current speech and method of the times in which they were written. How much more reasonable was it for the sacred writers to speak of *sunrise* and *sunset* (as we do even *now*) than to expound the laws of the planetary motion, and to refer to *the ends of the earth* instead of explaining its rotundity, and to call insane persons *lunatics* than to enter a special disclaimer against the influence of the moon in cerebral disease! The fact is, as has been well remarked, that books thus written would have been in part unintelligible to the men of their own times; and, so far as they were understood, would have run so entirely counter to their received opinions on extra-religious subjects as to awaken incredulity as to their religious contents. Scientific truth can be legitimately reached only step-wise, often with age-long preparation for a new step in advance, often with long interval between the announcement and the popular reception of a new fact, theory or law. Thoroughly scientific Scriptures would have laid upon them the impossible task of anticipating this progress; of revolutionizing men's notions about the universe before they knew the reasons for changing them, and, failing of this, they would necessarily have failed of a hospitable reception for their religious contents.

#### WHAT HUGH MILLER SAYS.

"What," says Hugh Miller, "would sceptics such as Hobbes and Hume have said of an opening chapter in Genesis that would describe successive periods—first, of mollusks, star lilies and crustaceans; next of fishes; next of reptiles and birds, then of mammals, and finally of man—and that would minutely portray a period in which there were lizards bulkier than

elephants, reptilian whales furnished with necks slim and long as the bodies of great snakes, and flying dragons, whose spread of wing greatly more than doubled that of the largest bird? The world would assuredly not receive such a revelation."

STRONG TESTIMONIES IN FAVOR OF THE HARMONY  
OF SCIENCE AND REVELATION.

How strong the testimonies of learned men in favor of the harmony of science and the Bible!

"Thus far," says Dr. Samuel Hopkins, "the demonstrations of natural science *have* been expositions of the Mosaic records, and, being such, they foreshadow the grand result to which her labors are tending—a complete verification of *all* the scientific mysteries recorded in our sacred writings."

"Science," says Dr. Atwater, "so far from disproving, confirms the entire inspiration of Scripture. This appears from the fact that there is no other way of accounting for the great amount of scientific truth, wholly unknown to ancient science, which the Bible sets forth. Take the most momentous of all—the cosmogony of the first chapter of Genesis, which presents the order of the creative epochs essentially as the latest conclusions of geological research show it to have been. Now, all this was entirely unknown to the early science and knowledge of the world. How could any writer of the book of Genesis have discovered or conceived of it, or have been led to make such a narration, the scientific import of which was wholly unknown to him, without supernatural guidance? Science, then, so far from discrediting, proves the Divine inspiration of the Bible in this climacteric and crucial case. But the

same is true of the latest trend of scientific discovery in reference to such matters as the unity of the race, the fall, the deluge, the Babel confusion of tongues and consequent dispersion, and the repeopling of the earth in separate portions by Noah's three sons. That the drift of ethnic, linguistic and geologic science is in this direction, is undeniable."

"I feel," said Professor Silliman, "that science and religion may walk hand in hand. They form two distinct volumes of revelation, and, both being records of the will of the Creator, both may be received as constituting a unity, declaring the mind of God."

To these valuable testimonies might be added many such, as the following:

"All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming the sacred Scriptures."—*Herschel*.

"In my investigations of natural phenomena, when I can meet anything in the Bible it affords me a firm platform on which to stand."—*Lieutenant Maury*.

"The grand old Book of God still stands, and this old earth the more its leaves are turned over and pondered the more it will sustain and illustrate the Sacred Word."—*Professor Dana*.

"The Shasters of the Hindoos contain false astronomy as well as false physiology, and the Koran of Mohammed distinctly avows the Ptolemaic system of the heavenly bodies, and so interwoven are these scientific errors with the religions of these sacred books that when you have proved the former you have disproved the latter. But the *Bible*, stating only facts, and adopting no system of human philosophy, has ever stood, and ever shall stand, in sublime simplicity and undecaying strength, while the winds and the waves of conflicting human opinions roar and dash harmlessly around, and the wrecks of a thousand false



systems of philosophy and religion are strewn along its base.”—*Professor Hitchcock*.

“There is no need to be frightened at the phantoms raised by such terms as matter, and force, and molecules, and protoplasmic energy, and rhythmic vibrations of the brain. There are no real terrors in a philosophy which affirms the conceivability that two and two might possibly make five, or in that which predicates that an infinite number of straight lines constitute a finite surface, or that which denies all evidence of a design in nature, or in that which assimilates the motives which induce a parent to support his offspring to the pleasures derived from wine and music, or in that which boldly asserts the unknowableness of the Supreme and the vanity of prayer. Surely philosophies which involve results such as these have no permanent grasp on human nature. They are in themselves suicidal, and in their turn, after their brief day, will, like other philosophies, be refuted or denied by the next comer, and are doomed to accomplish the happy dispatch.”—*Professor Pritchard*.

#### NO NEED FOR ALARM.

Any alarm, therefore, which the friends of Revelation may feel from the allegation that it conflicts with science is wholly unnecessary. They have nothing to fear from any discoveries that can be made in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. The geologist may dive and delve into our globe's deepest recesses; the astronomer may move along his star-paved way until we are dazzled at the story of his ascents; and the evolutionist may discourse learnedly about the whole animal creation culminating in man, having sprung from a little particle of jelly floating in some primeval sea; but, after all, the pillars of the “sure word of prophecy” will remain firm as



ever. Let science perfect yet more her telescopes and make taller her observatories, deeper her mines, and more searching her crucibles, and yet will not all the research, even though the new masters of physical lore should blaspheme where a Cuvier, a Newton and others adored, bring God into contradiction with Himself; or subvert the truth which He has given, or eclipse the light which shineth in this dark place. Still will it be true, however boldly it may be alleged that Jehovah's works conflict with His Word, that the highest deductions of reason harmonize with moral truth.

Certainly, if the scientists who assail the Bible had more of the spirit of the greatest of philosophers, as expressed in words quoted in every child's book: "I am but a child, picking up pebbles on the shore of the great sea of Truth," they would be less rash and reckless in assaulting the Word of God with their so-called "discoveries." It is high time for them to understand that their bold assertions must fall short of accomplishing their design. It is not as easy as they imagine to unsettle men's faith in the oracles of revealed truth. A religion wrought into the world's history through the long centuries, mastering the confidence of men in spite of intellectual struggle, verifying itself to the heart through practical experience in sorrow and trial, justifying itself to the deepest intuitions of the whole race in spiritual things—a religion that has quickened thought, overthrown despotism, softened manners, inspired hope: whose banner is light and whose breath is benediction—such a religion cannot be dislodged from men's affection and confidence by boasting prophecy, by counter-revelation out of a "vain imagination," nor by decrying the intelligence

of those who cling to it. The "seed" which the modern "birds of the air" would with the old appetite devour, is no longer a seed, as they fancy, but has "become a tree," in the branches of which they themselves are "lodging." Well would it be for them also to remember, that upon the attitude we assume to the Bible depends what we find in it. Those who come to it with a receptivity for truth find their faith confirmed; but to those who come as doubters, God's principle is true,—to the pure He shows Himself pure, and to the froward He shows Himself froward,—God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. As Cowper has beautifully said :

"Learning itself, received into a mind  
By nature weak, or viciously inclined,  
Serves but to lead philosophers astray,  
Where children would with ease discern the way."

## EIGHTH LETTER.

SIR: The Bible is the oldest book in the world. It was written when the foundations were being laid. It goes further than any other book toward the time when the waters of the deluge subsided from the hills of Western Asia, further than any other toward the very morning of creation, when "the sons of God shouted for joy."

### TESTIMONY OF CRITICS.

All candid critics admit that the Scriptures contain the most ancient forms of truth now known to men. And well they might. Any one, with the aid of chronological tables, may easily make for himself profitable comparisons between the antiquity of the book and that of other writings and events. The volume contains the only authentic history of the world before the flood. We find in the Pentateuch one or two stanzas of poetry composed in the antediluvian period. The Hebrew statutes were enacted a thousand years before Justinian reformed the Roman jurisprudence. In the Bible we have the record of chartered rights secured to the people more than two thousand years before Magna Charta.

It is beyond doubt that the first chapter of Genesis contains the oldest writing: twenty-five hundred years before the invention of printing. Xenophon's record

of the conversation of Socrates, in his *Memorabilia*, seems an old book to us, yet similar topics were discussed in *Ecclesiastes* six hundred years before. The works of Tacitus, Plutarch, and Quintillian are not modern, yet the books of the New Testament are older than they.

As to the book of Job, its age is beyond conjecture. Those who make it as modern as they can are compelled to place its origin at least one thousand years before Homer. When Priam was king of Troy, Job was of remote antiquity. The name of Alexander has no modern sound for us, yet when Alexander invaded Syria, the book of Job might have been read before him as the work of an author more time-honored than the name of Alexander is now.

The writings of Confucius are modern compared with most of the Bible, and the most that the Hindoos can justly claim for their sacred books, the Vedas, is that they were written five hundred years after the death of Moses. The Koran is a book fresh from the press compared with the Scriptures.

#### WONDERFUL FOR ITS AGE AND PRESERVATION.

With what wonder should we gaze upon a fortress that had withstood the assaults of succeeding generations for thousands of years! And with what strange interest should we look at a man who, during a life of many centuries, had often been cast into the sea without being drowned, drugged with strychnine without being poisoned, and riddled with bullets without being numbered with the slain?

Thus has it been with the Word of God during all its history. It was not to be expected that a volume

which imposes self-restraint upon the wilful, humility upon the arrogant, mercy upon the cruel—which would bend the knees of the self-righteous philosophers before the cross of a crucified Redeemer, and which would quell all the tumultuous desires which attach us to this world, that it may plant the sublime hopes and aspirations of eternity in their room—would command the willing deference of an unconverted world. Nor has the result failed to sustain the antecedent probability. The Bible has had, all along its course, to struggle against opposition, visible and latent, artful and violent. It has had to contend with the prevalence of error, the tyranny of passion, and the cruelty of persecution. Numerous foes have risen up against it: pagans, who have aimed to destroy it, bigots, who have striven to monopolize it, and ungodly men, who have hated it for its purity and penalties. Jehoiakim cut to pieces the Divine roll, and threw it into the fire. About one hundred and seventy years before Christ, Antiochus caused all the copies of the Jewish Scriptures to be burnt. Three hundred and three years after, Diocletian, by an edict, ordered all the Scriptures to be committed to the flames, and Eusebius, the historian, tells us that he saw large heaps of them burning in the market-place. Nor has this spirit ever failed to show itself.

But from all the assaults which have been made upon it, the Bible has been preserved. Though cast into the fire, it has risen triumphantly from its ashes, though crushed, yet, like the diamond, every part of which, when broken, exhibits the beauty and perfection of the whole, it has proved its indestructibility, and, though sunk in the waters, it has come up again,

studded and shining with the costliest pearls. It has survived the shock of all its enemies, and withstood the ravages of time. Like the ark of Noah, upborne and protected by the invisible hand of the Almighty, it has safely ridden over the rolling billows of human history, and, as the fabled pillars of Seth, which are said to have bidden defiance to the Deluge, it has stood unmoved in the midst of that flood which sweeps away men, with their labors, into oblivion. Many a volume that once bade fair for immortality is now utterly forgotten. Of the unnumbered thousands that have been written since the dawn of literature, how few, even of those that once filled the trump of fame, and were ranked among the chief productions of human genius, have escaped the ravages of time, and the forgetfulness of man! Though the shelves of mighty libraries groan with the learned labors of the past, yet of the vast majority of the works therein deposited, it may be said that, "like the bodies of Egyptian kings in their pyramids, they retain only a grim semblance of life amid neglect, darkness, and decay." Oh! what wreck and ruin meet the eye as it glances at the past! Thrones have crumbled, empires have fallen, and philosophers and their systems have vanished away. The very monuments of man's power have been converted into the mockery of his weakness. His eternal cities moulder in their ruins; the serpent hisses in the cabinet where he planned his empire, and echo is startled by the foot which breaks the silence that has reigned for ages in his hall of feast and song. Yet, notwithstanding all this desolation, the stream which first bubbled up at the foot of the Eternal Throne has continued to roll on with silent majesty and might,

bearing down each opposing barrier, and declaring to perishing multitudes on its brink, that, while "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, which fadeth away, the word of the Lord endureth forever."

#### NOT DILUTED.

Nor is this all. Not only has the Bible not been destroyed, but it has not even been diluted by the lapse of centuries. It has not been ruined by the sapping of its foundations, or by the incorporation of any new element with it, which has marred its integrity, or vitiated its purity. With it, like God its author, there has been no variableness, or shadow of a change. The world has suffered its boasted classics to be blurred, but the Church can rejoice over the fair pages of her precious books, assured that the far descent of these venerable treasures has neither altered their character, nor changed their identity. These Divine oracles have come down to us in such unimpaired fulness and accuracy, that we are placed as advantageously towards them as the generation which gazed upon "that book of the law" to which Moses had been adding chronicles and statutes for forty years, or those crowds which hung on the lips of Jesus, as He recited a parable on the shore of the Galilean lake, or those churches which received from Paul or Peter one of their epistles of warning or exposition.

#### TRIUMPHED OVER ALL OPPOSITION.

It is even so. No weapon that has been formed against the Bible has prospered. It has survived the power of secret treachery and open violence. The time has been, when to read it was death. Infidelity has



fought against it with relentless malignity, but it has successfully resisted all its potency, passing unhurt through the hands of Julians, Celsuses, and Porphyrys, and defying all the sophistries of Hume, the eloquence of Gibbon, the inuendoes of Rousseau, the blasphemy of Paine, the mockery of Voltaire, the empty cavilling of Strauss, the shallow witticism of Rénan, and the bold onslaughts of the Communists of France and the Rationalistic commentators of Germany.

Thus has the Word of God lived and triumphed. It has not only maintained itself, but false philosophies and pretended revelations have obtained a stronger hold in the world, simply by counterfeiting its outward semblance. Thus has it made its way, carrying its own burdens, and the much heavier weights that human depravity has put upon it. Tested by the chances of any mere human conflict, of any philosophic or literary strife, it would ages ago have vanished from the field and been consigned to oblivion, but here it is yet, the mightiest element in human thought, and challenging to the conflict the mightiest of human antagonisms. How it rises up, ever higher and stronger, against every fresh assault! every new phase of unbelief, when it is really new, only calling out some before unknown aspect of power in this exhaustless defence.

Wonderful Book! "It survives both friends and foes. Without being able to speak one word in its own behalf, but what it has already said, without any power of explanation or rejoinder, in deprecation of the attacks made upon it, or to assist those who defend it, it passes along the ages in majestic silence. Impassive amidst all this tumult of controversy, in which it

takes no part, it might be likened to some great ship floating down a mighty river like the Amazon or Orinoco, the shores of which are inhabited by various savage tribes. From every little creek or inlet, from every petty port or bay, sally flotillas of canoes, some seemingly friendly and some seemingly hostile, filled with warriors in all the terrors of war paint and their artillery of bows and arrows. They are hostile tribes, and soon turning their weapons against one another, assail each other with great fury and mutual loss. Meantime the noble vessel silently moves on through the scene of confusion, without deigning to alter its course or to fire a shot: perhaps here and there a seaman casts a compassionate glance from the lofty bulwarks, and wonders at the hardihood of those who come to assail his leviathan."

## DIFFUSION.

Wonderful Book! the more it is opposed, the more it flourishes, and never did it bid as fair as at present to be the Book of the whole family of mankind. It has spread open its page in almost every land—it is printed in Chinese camps, pondered in the red man's wigwam, sought after in Benares, a school-book in Feejee, eagerly bought in Constantinople, loved in the kloofs of Kaffir-land, while the voices of the dead from Assyria to Egypt have been lifted up to bear it witness.

No book has taken such a hold on the world. The world is not willing to let it die. Mark what even Theodore Parker, as truthfully, as strangely from his theological stand-point, says on this point: "The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land

of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book from a nation alike despised in ancient and modern times. It is read of a Sabbath in all the ten thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and colors the talk of the street. The bark of the merchant cannot sail the sea without it; no ship of war goes to the conflict but the Bible is there. It enters men's closets, mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for help in her new duties; men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness when the fever of the world is on them. The aching head finds a softer pillow when the Bible lies underneath. The mariner escaping from shipwreck clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the peddler in his crowded pack; cheers him at eventide when he sits down dusty and fatigued; brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born, gives names to half Christendom, rejoices with us, has sympathy for our mourning, tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and our patriarchs prayed. The timid man about awaking from this dream of life looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife and babes and home. Men rest

on this their dearest hopes. It tells them of God and of His blessed Son—of earthly duties and of heavenly rest.”

#### PRESERVATION PROVES DIVINE ORIGIN.

How plain is it, then, that the fact of the Bible's preservation from all the enmity with which it has been assailed, is a vindication of its heavenly origin! It is utterly impossible to assign this hostility to any other cause than the disclosures which it makes respecting the extreme deadliness of sin, and of the ineffable purity and justice of the Divine nature. Let it be even supposed that the unaided genius of man could have produced such a volume as the Bible, displaying, as it confessedly does, in the judgment even of its enemies, such sublimity of thought, such knowledge of the heart, and such amazing depth of wisdom—is it likely that writers of so extraordinary capacity would have given characteristics to their work which render it an object of such deep and widespread aversion?—that they would have been so weak as to represent God and human nature in characters unpalatable to the natural man, and, most of all, on the supposition that they were impostors, unpalatable to themselves? Such a mixture of weakness and wisdom we must at once see to be incongruous and impossible.

Yet the Book which these men have written has, through all the ages, made its way, and now flourishes. Surely in this preservation is an argument of the divinity of the volume, which no sophistry of infidelity can overthrow. The resistance of ages is its crowning legitimization. It is the visible battle-field of invisible forces, showing in the radiant faces of the martyrs who have died for it, and the unearthly struggles of those

who have sought to banish it from the earth, what mysterious interests are suspended on its safety or destruction. Beyond a doubt, a volume exhibiting signs of having been at one time trampled on by rage, at another moth-eaten by neglect, here scorched by the fires of bigotry, there stained with the venom of infidelity, in every page sprinkled with the blood of its martyred defenders, and yet substantially entire in every part, has herein much to prove that it has always been in the keeping of Omnipotence—in the hollow of His hand.

I press you, Sir, with this argument, and you cannot without unfairness deny its force. Other books have been launched upon the tide of time and gone down, leaving no trace upon the waters! Why, then, does the Bible still live on, and speak in its quickening power? Why does it retain its vitality? Why do the winds and waves of human passions obey it? It is because there is in it one circle of life that we find in no other book, but without which the spirit of man must die. Creation, providence, moral government, redemption, eternal life—blot out these words from human speech, and what becomes of the spirit of man? It is because this venerable volume links heaven and earth together—it is because *this* is its teaching and utterance, that it ever renews its youth, and speaks with an authority which can never die.

“ Read and revere the sacred page, a page  
Which not the whole creation could produce;  
Which not the conflagration shall destroy,  
In Nature's ruins not one letter lost.”

## NINTH LETTER.

\* SIR: As it is mainly against the Old Testament the assaults of infidelity are directed, I now propose to call your attention to some of its distinctive traits in proof of its superhuman origin.

I have already adduced from its pages evidence of its historical, poetical and oratorical excellence. But it is manifest that any self-conscious exercise of the artists' skill to produce beauty of this sort, is quite alien from the whole volume. It has poetry; the sublimest that ever burned within the bosom of man, but it does not come with any pretense of possessing such,—there are thoughts and facts which totally overshadow even the sublime style of the writings. It has science. It dares to speak with authority of things past, present, and to come, of things seen and of that which lies far beyond the present scope of view. It passes out where no other utterance ever was heard, where all science is as silent as the tongue of the dead. But it does not aim to teach science, it has a loftier mission. So, too, it has law and philosophy,—but all these things are only incidents which, with superb power, cast excellency upon the sublimer truths which it unfolds,—but the shrubbery which grows upon the outer shoulders of this mountain of strength,—but the plumage of the angel that publishes glad tidings.



## RELATES TO GOD AND MAN.

The whole purpose and spirit of the volume breathe of God, and of man's relations to God. This is its distinctive character. The history purports to be a history of the way in which God has governed the world, which He has formed from nothing, and in which He has placed man, and formed man into families and nations. The one thought which is always present is, that God's will must be done everywhere; that it is a righteous will, and that in the end it will make righteousness and peace prevail in the world. God, and man as formed for the knowledge and love of God, the conflict between man's lawless will and God's righteous will, the final victory of God's will over evil,—these are the one great subject of all law, of all history, of all poetry, of all teaching, of all prophecy, in this great national literature. Does not this fact place it alone in all extant literature?

Elsewhere we may find indeed something which aims to be theology, something which is human history, or human philosophy, or the skilful painting of human action and emotion. But there what aims to declare God, and what aims to describe man, are kept almost always apart. Here, and here alone, so far as we know, in any extensive literature, God and man are ever present to each other, and in the closest contact, and the light which comes from the throne of God irradiates and fills the world of human life. Here, and here alone, the divine and the human element of life are found together and in harmonious combination. Must not the people of which this is the literature be one which has been placed under some very special divine training?



## TOUCHES LIFE OF INDIVIDUAL SOUL.

The spirit of the Old Testament *touches the life of the individual soul toward God* quite as closely as it touches the springs of national and family life. Of this there is a striking example in the *Book of Psalms*. "This Hebrew anthology contains hymns of earnest aspiration, thanksgiving and self-communing, in which the devout spirit finds a second self. The melody of the Psalmist has many moods, but the song is ever the genuine outburst of his heart, and the reader is lured into living sympathy with it—nay, as it throbs underneath the page, he is brought into immediate fellowship with the singer, and not with his shadow. For himself, in his various changes, is embodied in his Psalms, whether he sinks in deep contrition or soars away in spiritual rapture, whether he extols mercy or sinks into awe before judgment, or whether he lays his sword and sceptre at the foot of the Throne in offer of suit and service or in acknowledgment that the kingdom and the victory are alike from God. The Psalter is the poetry of the spiritual life; its beauty, power and freshness never fail, for it does not consist of abstract and impersonal effusions, or of objective theological dogmas. Difference of age and country at once fades away. In the sorrows of this representative bard many a soul has seen its own, and has felt the load lightened by its share in his recorded consolations, while his loftier strains so glide into the 'merry heart' that it sings them without any sense of strangeness, without any consciousness of formal appropriation. Therefore the Psalms have always been very cherished companions, not simply because they are a body of divine truth bearing on man's highest interest,

but because they come home to human experiences and tenderly touch them on so many points; because they are not only the true elements of public worship, but may also be murmured in earnest soliloquy as the spirit in confidence and joyousness lifts itself to God."

#### LEGISLATIVE ASPECT.

Glance now, Sir, at the *legislative* aspect of the Old Testament. The Mosaic Law, it is very evident, was not copied from any system existing elsewhere. It is evidently not the attempt of a speculative mind to legislate for an imaginary commonwealth, but a code which has regulated, or been intended to regulate, the conduct of men living in a definite country, partly embodying their ancient customary law, partly correcting it, and always distinctly practical in its aim. This being so, it is impossible not to be greatly impressed by the general spirit of humanity, of freedom, of good sense and fairness, which it breathes. The wisdom of the whole, as a system of rules intended to keep the children of Israel a separate people, devoted to the service of one God, in well-ordered simplicity of life, as a race of peasant proprietors, is very remarkable.

"The hand of time," says an ancient writer, "has been passing over the mighty fabric of human laws for four thousand years, and yet little has been added to the stock of legal science, and little change has been made in the most improved principles of human jurisprudence since the days of Moses. As might have been justly supposed, there have been great improvements in commercial law, because the Hebrews were an agricultural, and not extensively a commercial peo-

ple. And there have been improvements in international law, because the Hebrews were, by divine command, separated from other nations. Laws also have been changed by the condition of the countries for which they have been enacted; they have been extended in their specifications; they have been modified by the character, customs, religion, soil, position and pursuits of different nations, but the fundamental principles, the great outline of legislative science, are found in the civil polity of the Jews. The last four books of the Pentateuch contain the foundations of all wise legislation."

#### THE DECALOGUE.

In relation to the *Decalogue*, it is marked by a grand peculiarity which renders it entirely unique. *It subordinates*, as indeed does the Bible throughout, *ethics to theology*. Its foundations, as has been said, are laid in the idea of God and our relations to Him; its sanctions are derived from His will. The great commands of the "Second Table," the duties we owe to ourselves or our fellow-men, are here ultimately based on the relations in which all creatures stand to Him who demands our homage in the "First Table." Not that they are represented as the mere expression of arbitrary will; on the contrary, they are represented as emanating from a will itself determined by supreme rectitude, wisdom and goodness, which knows what is "*good*," and enjoins what it enjoins, from a perfect knowledge of our nature and the necessary conditions of our well-being. How much this draft of morality, consistently articulated as it is with the idea of God, differs from that of the heathen nations in general, is obvious enough to any one who has attentively considered their history.

## CONFESS THEIR OWN INCOMPLETENESS.

The Hebrew Scriptures *confess their own incompleteness*. They intimate a wonderful *future*, point altogether to it, and are wholly inexplicable, unless on the supposition of it. By this they are distinguished from every other writing of the same kind. Other nations in their religion have lived looking backward regretfully to some past time, when knowledge was fuller and faith was stronger, and God was more honored. But the faithful Israelite, whilst being thankful for what had been already given him, ever more and more earnestly cherished the thought of something more which would be given in the latter days. That mysterious volume which contains the records of this remarkable people,—so large, so various, and whose remotest authors are a thousand years asunder, had a single character, and that character was promissory. *That* still follows it through all its many styles and all its many windings,—*that* still is found,—yea, more distinctly caught,—in the dim recesses of those half-revealings where it whispers more than it speaks aloud. The Pentateuch moves with an epic cadence, Joshua rings with heroic numbers, and Judges sustains the martial strain. In Ruth the song sinks to a gentle pastoral, soon to break out as a sonnet in Esther, then swell to a drama in Job, and heave like a restless sea in the lyric Psalms. From these it subsides to a quieter temper in Proverbs, and, as if inspired by beatific vision, it rises into the ravishing strains of the Song of Songs, then drops to a wail in Lamentations, and then mounts again in the supernatural utterances of the sad strange Prophets. Yet, with all this wealth of variety, these books of the Old Testament are but the nine and

thirty parts of one compact epic, singing beforehand with a supernatural unity of purpose—"The Word made Flesh." The golden threads of Christ's prophetic biography and the silver threads of His acted prophecy stretch from Genesis to Malachi, and here and there and everywhere, woven in by the Holy Spirit, are diamonds, glittering reflections beforehand of the one character of the epic, Jesus Christ.

#### TENDERNESS.

Another characteristic of the Hebrew Scriptures is *the tenderness* with which they are pervaded. It is apparently a very common impression that the New Testament is full of tenderness, and gentleness, and love, and the Old Testament of rigor, of justice and of punishment; that the Jesus of the New Testament represents a God of infinite mercy; the Jehovah of the Old Testament a God hard, inexorable, unsympathetic. But it is very certain that, historically, those representations of God in the New Testament, which are the most sacred to us, are found also in the Old Testament; that Jesus Himself does but develop in a perfected form the germ truths which are hidden in the writings of Moses, of David and of Isaiah. Where, for example, will one find a more touching representation of the tenderness of God than in Christ's parable of the Lost Sheep? The shepherd comes after the sheep, takes it upon his shoulders, bears it home, and summons his neighbors to rejoice with him. This picture has so appealed to the sympathies of men that it has been repeated in sermon, song, story and picture, and has not, to the present day, lost its beauty or its power. And yet Christ does but re-paint that which he found

upon David's canvas, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." He does but re-sing the song which Isaiah sang:—"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

If there be a representation of God's tenderness which has taken even deeper hold upon the human heart, it is the one afforded by that other inimitable parable,—the parable of the Prodigal Son; but, as in the acorn cut open one finds the oak with rootlets, stem and leaves complete, so this parable may be found enfolded in the seed that David planted:—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

In truth that picture of God which is of all others the tenderest and the sweetest, which draws us nearer to Him than His portrait as a shepherd, or even as a Father, is the picture afforded only by the Old Testament, "as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." The New Testament gives us our charter to cry out "Our Father;" the Old Testament gives us our charter to cry out "Our Mother God."

Wherever, then, the notion of a hard, relentless and unsympathizing God may have come from, it is not fairly derived from the representation of His character, afforded by the sacred writers of the Old Testament books.

#### STATISTICAL ACCURACY.

The Hebrew Scriptures are characterized by *statistical minuteness and accuracy*. In all ancient mythical history there is that misty, magnifying, distorting, wonder-making, legendary air, confounding all chro-



nology and all geography, that absence of dates, that confusion of places, that blending of events far distant from each other in time and space, which show the want of all attesting means of knowledge. Such history, instead of having any accurate chronicles of years, does not even make any pretence to it; it would seem to have regarded any such precision of places and times as at war with that feeling of the wonderful that filled the minds of its writers, and which dwells chiefly in the vast and the obscure.

Not so with the Scripture history. "The moment we open its pages we discover a most remarkable difference everywhere. This peculiarity, so obvious to the least reflecting reader, is what may be called the *statistical* character of the Scripture Chronicles. The Bible is a *Book of Numbers*. It is a trait maintained consistently throughout. From the exact nativities of the Antediluvian ages, from the precise dates of the rising and subsiding waters of the flood, from Noah's almanac, as we may say, down to Haggai's diary, or careful noting of the very year and month and day of the month, in which the word of the Lord came unto him, it is all of a piece, one consistent number-giving, time-keeping record. The Jews were a journalizing people, or genealogizing people; the Bible is their family book of entries, just as we now employ certain pages of it as a register of births and deaths. Precise statistics are everywhere, and everywhere purporting to be from men who knew, and who are, in the main, supposed to be recording known present or passing facts. There is nothing like it in the history of any other people on earth, certainly not in any early history. All the way up to the flood, with a few gaps which



seem to have been left designedly to baffle human curiosity, there is a regular chronological track."

#### CONNECTION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

The Old Testament was so constructed as to require and necessitate the New. We have seen already that it confessed its own incompleteness ; but it did more : it laid the foundation of what was to follow. "The history of the Hebrew people," says Ewald, "is, at the foundation, the history of the true religion passing through all the stages of progress by which it attained to its consummation, the religion which, on this narrow territory, advances through all struggles to complete victory, and at length reveals itself in its full glory and might, to the end that, spreading abroad by its own irresistible energy, it may never vanish away, but may become the eternal heritage and blessing of all nations."

A writer of great ability thus forcibly demonstrates the connection between the Old and New Testaments :

"Old English conveyancers, in preparing the records of the transfer of some important estate, drew up two copies of the same deed upon the opposite ends of one and the same parchment. Then the scrivener's knife severed the skin into two separate documents, by a line which was jagged like the teeth of a saw, or undulating like the hollows in the water of a lake rippling before the breeze. The old name 'indenture' survives to this day at the head of our deeds, when the old usage of actual 'denting' or 'indenting' has been generally abandoned. One party, the original grantor, kept the one copy ; the other, the purchaser, retained the counterpart. Was there

in after times doubt as to the genuineness of the document, antique simplicity soon determined the doubt by laying the two indented portions of the one original vellum together. If tooth met tooth, if the indenture tallied without shrinkage and without overlapping, there was tangible, visible demonstration of the original unity. There was the same grain in the skin, and there was exact coadaptation in the line of severance. The indenture stamped the genuineness.

“Now, in our Bible, the Old and the New are not bare verbal transcripts the one of the other, but the same Divine Author who furnished both made the ancient to fit by a line indented in divine exactness and symmetry into the new, the wave in the low trough of it upon the one parchment meeting another wave in the answering crest of that wave as upon the other parchment, so that the two covenants thus authenticated showed the same Supreme Mind. It was a mind, one in its several dispensations, and harmonious through all ages of the world’s history. Prophecy, or ‘history in anticipation,’ responds to history, or prophecy becomes fact, across the two sides of a vast chasm, just as in the days of Joshua, Ebal pealed back to Gerizim and Gerizim pealed back to Ebal the alternate snatches of the same law, and the strophe and the antistrophe swelled up together, praising the same Jehovah, Leader of their exodus and Giver of all their victories. Promise, warning and unfinished history upon the one side, tallied with and matched fulfilment, and retribution, and completed history on the other side. ‘Comparing spiritual things with spiritual,’ is the Apostle’s enunciation as to the rule of successful interpretation laid down by the Holy Ghost, the Inspirer of the en-

tire record. Collate the origins with the results—lay the pledges of Eden and Sinai against the achievements of Bethlehem and Calvary—and see illustrated, as over the stormy tides of human commotion, and over the wide chasms of earthly centuries, the unity and inflexibility of Him who is in one mind, and no one can turn Him, the far-sighted and the infallible Sovereign who, amid the heavings of primeval chaos, saw distinctly the welterings of the final conflagration and the orderings of the last judgment. He—in this His unity of purpose, which He had maintained through all varieties of utterance, and all relays of successive scribes, and all mutations in the outer form of His providence—had indented the Old Testament so that it required and necessitated the New, and then resuming, after the interval of a dozen generations of mankind, His unwavering, unforgetting scheme, He had indented the New Testament to supplement and to perfect the Old Testament.”

## TENTH LETTER.

SIR: Let me direct your attention to several other peculiarities of the Bible in addition to those already mentioned. This I do with regret that they must be so succinctly stated.

### PROGRESSIVENESS.

In the general manner of the works of God, we see results attained by slow evolution from the minutest beginnings, and by a prolonged application as well as stupendous complexity of means and instruments. Progressive development, carrying out rudimental ideas through various changes of structure and condition toward a completed system, is the latest doctrine of science concerning physical nature, organized being, and human society. So, from analogy, there was reason to expect a gradual and progressive revelation of the will of God.

But this is also evident from other considerations. A revelation must involve a moral probation, else men would be treated as machines, and human responsibility would be destroyed. If the great purpose of creation is to be answered, there must be a preparation: a training, so to speak, of individuals and of the world. Revelation could not in this view be entire at once. No single period in the world's history could be fixed on in which the whole divine plan might be pro-

pounded, without violating the conditions of moral probation to most of the generations of mankind. There must be a gradual development, if the graces of faith and hope are to be exercised with practical effect upon human conduct. This is just the nature of the Bible revelation, propounding truth by degrees, human language and human instruments being employed for this, so as to give the probationary purpose its fullest effect, sufficient being made known for the age to which any part of the revelation was made, and further developments coming after, not contrary to but illustrative and confirmatory of that which had preceded, modelled after such a manner that, while each, as just said, was thoroughly suitable to its own time, the whole should when completed be of perfect consistency, and continue to serve its purpose of probation through the rest of the generations of the earth. The revelation must be coextensive with those who were to be benefited by it, and must therefore travel along the course of man's history. And to answer this end it must be shaped, without derogating from God's holiness, so as to meet man's ignorance, weakness, and sin.

#### MISCELLANEOUSNESS.

Not with square and compasses of man's device has God built the earth and meted out the heavens. His creation is miscellaneous, broken up at every point—here a sheltered valley, there a profound abyss; on one side a mountain with its summit in the clouds, on the other a leaping cataract; while off in the distance the waves lift up their voice, and in the depths above the stars move each on its separate path, and shine with a differing glory. Something like this analogy prepares

us to expect in the Bible. The want of systematic arrangement in it, therefore, instead of being a basis, as infidels allege, for an objection to the book, is, on the contrary, an argument and an evidence in its favor.

“The complaint of the want of method in Scripture,” says an eminent scholar: “what is it in fact but this, that it is not dead, but living?—that it is no *herbarium*, no *hortus siccus*, but a garden; a wilderness of sweets, with its flowers upon their stalks—its plants freshly growing, the dew upon their leaves, the mould about their roots—with its lowly hyssops and its cedars of God? And when men say that there is a want of *method* in it, they would speak more accurately if they said that there was want of *system*, for the highest, even the method of the Spirit, may reign where system there is none. Method is divine—is inseparable from the ideas of God and of order; but system is of man, is a help to the weakness of his faculties, is the artificial arrangement by which he brings within his limited ken that which in no other way he would be able to grasp. That there should be books of Systematic Theology—books with their plan and scheme thus lying on their very surface, and meeting us at once,—this is most needful, but most needful also that Scripture should not be such a book. The dearest interests of all, of wise men equally as of women and children, demand this.”

## VARIETY.

If the Scriptures were to be the Book which should leaven the world, which should offer nutriment, not merely for some men, but for all men, there was a necessity that they should be characterized by diversity.



This necessity seems to be inseparable, also, from the nature of their origin, as composed by numerous authors, writing at far distant dates, in different languages, in the most diverse circumstances, and with the usual peculiarities of individual genius.

Nor is there any inconsistency between what is now affirmed, and what was said in a previous letter touching the Bible's unity. *Oeness* is not *sameness*, neither is it incompatible with variety. "Just as in the human body, we, having many members, are one body, and the perfection of the body is not the repetition of the same members over and over again, but the harmonious tempering of different members, all being instinct with one life—so it is in the Scripture: whether we look at the Old or New Testament, the same richness and variety of form reveal themselves, so that it may be truly said, that out of the ground of this Paradise, the Lord God has made 'to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.'"

Men are very various in their turns of mind. One takes most kindly to narrative, another to proverb, another to poetry, another to epistle, another to the lofty oration. The same person in various moods is inclined, now to this and now to that form of writing. The Bible provides for this variety. Its histories describe, its poems sing, its apothegms curtly speak, its arguments enchain, its prophecies proclaim in mingled prose and song. Its form and contents are so various as to suit every taste and meet every condition. On its pages the king and the president may learn something that concerns himself, and which, if studied and practised, would save many a nation from that worst of public nuisances—a godless ruler. The work-



ingman may here read of his craft, and in allusion to it discover that the God of the whole earth thinketh upon the poor and lowly. The merchant is reminded of the true merchandise, the pearl of great price, and is recommended to buy the truth and sell it not. The soldier, amid many records of hair-breadth escapes in the imminent deadly breach, will find an account of the good fight of faith and the whole armor of God. The sailor may not only read the history of a voyage and shipwreck, which, by competent authority, has been declared the finest piece of composition in the Greek language, but he may learn how to navigate the sea of life, and reach at last the desired haven of immortality. The tradesman may not only find many thousand hints on buying and selling, but may also learn the truth, of which he has sometimes need to be reminded, that a just balance "is the delight of the Lord." The husbandman finds in this volume allusions almost innumerable to his calling, and by them is conducted to the understanding of the sowing of the good seed—of the growth of the Christian character from the early blade to the full corn in the ear, and is led to reflect upon the future great harvest of the world. And students everywhere are urged to "give attendance to reading," and are reminded that "much study is a weariness to the flesh." It is addressed, also, to all stages of human life. Childhood never tires of the ark of bulrushes, of the coat of many colors, of the boy-prophet, of the Shunamite's son, of the youth that slew the giant, of the captive maid of Israel, of young Josiah, of the wonderful child found after three days' anxious search, surrounded by grave doctors, and both hearing and asking them questions. Youth finds

entertainment and instruction in the biographies of Joseph, and Jacob, and Daniel, and others of that class. Manhood is yet charmed by the holy maxims, the just retributions, the unexpected deliverances, the heavenly principles, the lofty morals and the sublime doctrines of this old book. And old age is never weary of reading of its own crown of glory, of the fruit it may yield to the end of life, and of those promises which never fail amid the fleeting show and tinselled splendors of the present life. It is universal, also, in its adaptation to every state of the human heart. Here the presumptuous sinner is condemned; the proud are confounded; the humble are exalted; the penitent are comforted; the trembling believer is confirmed; the hypocrite is unmasked; the painted Pharisee is stripped of the rouge and the veneer; the rejoicing saint is cautioned; and man, whatever his spiritual condition, finds himself addressed by One who knoweth him altogether, and who understandeth his thoughts afar off.

We have a most striking illustration of the variety of the Bible in the representation which it makes of Jesus. One of our American artists, wishing to perfect for himself a portrait and a bust of Shakspeare, took the death mask from the face of the poet, and had twenty or thirty photographs made, from every possible angle of vision, that he might get the fullest light on every point of the face and head; then came the portrait on the canvas, and then the stately head in marble. So we look at the figure and face of Christ, as these are given us in the Bible; from the earliest prophecy, from the law, from the ritual, from the psalm and the song, from the evangelical prophecies of Isaiah, from

the story of Matthew, and the other of Mark, and the other of Luke, and the wonderful spiritual story of John, from the argument of Paul, the exhortation of Peter, and the great vision at last of the King in the heavens—when the garden, with which the race began, has become the eternal city of God, and when the babe prince is the Lord of the saints—we take all these, and from them all we get such a transcendent image of the Son of God as no one writer could have given.

## MYSTERIOUS POWER.

The Bible has a most *mysterious power*. Coleridge confessed that it met him further down in his nature, and spoke deeper to his heart than any other volume. This is a fact that has again and again been felt. There are times in a man's history, says one, when these words seem to blaze with such a depth of significance that we tremble with awe, or thrill with gladness at the unutterable things that glow and stretch away behind them. They seem like apertures through which we see the awful light of eternity. This is not the fancy of a few heated enthusiasts, but the recorded testimony of some of the calmest, loftiest and purest minds of our race. Nor is it a mere literary phenomenon, for it is felt by the Kaffre woman in the bush and the toiling artisan in the workshop as deeply as by the mystic dreamer of Kubla Khan or the lofty Jansenist of Port Royal. They all testify with one voice that as they gaze upon these words there are periods when they seem to open up a shaft of light, which at one time is all flashing with the brightness of Heaven and at another all red with the glare of Hell. How can this fact, as a mere psychological

phenomenon, be explained? If it be true that Jehovah has in very deed enshrined himself in these wonderful words, unfolding a gleam of the awful Shekinah to the unveiled and disenchanted spirit, we can understand this strange and mysterious power. If these books be as some wondrous wind-harp, or some Memnonian sculpture, from whose depths the breath of God's mouth and the light of God's presence evoke this strange melody, we can comprehend to some extent the secret of its entrancing strains. But if there is no such in-dwelling of the Godhead in these writings, and no such breathing of God's Spirit through these words, this fact stands before us in the phenomena of mind an inscrutable and inexplicable mystery.

#### CARRIES ITS OWN EVIDENCE.

*The Bible carries in its contents evidence of its divine origin.* It delivers things which could not have been known but by divine help. The narrative of creation, the notices of angels, the announcement of God's counsels, the description of the happy future inheritance of the righteous, and specially the utterances of prophecy, cannot have proceeded from man's unassisted powers. Either those high mysterious announcements are the vain speculations of an unbridled imagination, or they have been communicated by some divine teaching. Either the predictions of the Bible are the mere guesses of sagacious men, or they are veritably the oracles of God. But see for a moment if they *can* be happy guesses. Let all license be given for explaining events by calling them coincidences; let the times when they were uttered be brought down as low as ingenious critics desire to bring them: we have still the fact that,

in the age of Christ—nay, two centuries before Christ—there was a body of writings referring to the future condition of the Jews; of Tyre, of Egypt, of Babylon, which the events of successive centuries, even to our own days, have been only more clearly confirming; so that we have standing proof before our eyes that things have happened, contrary to the probabilities of the times when these prophecies were delivered, but in singular accordance with the prophecies themselves. How is this to be explained? The only satisfactory conclusion is that the writers of such words were divinely guided. Any other hypothesis presents difficulties of the most formidable cast.

## INEXHAUSTIBLE.

It belongs to the very primal necessities of a book which is ordained for the cultivating of humanity that it should be adapted to a life-long study; that no man should ever come to its end, himself containing it, instead of being contained by it, as by something far larger than himself. And who needs to be told that the Bible is of this *inexhaustible character*? It is so constructed as to develop constantly something new. It demands a vigorous exercise of the understanding. No man that has ever lived could be said to have read it *through*. Other books lose their interest after a few perusals, but the Bible never does. The more we read it the more we desire to read, and the more we find to read. It still has, after assiduous and repeated perusal, the charm of novelty, like the great orb of day, at which we are wont to gaze with unabated astonishment from infancy to old age. The more we gaze at its splendors the more is our vision dazzled

and overpowered, and the more we investigate its truths the more do its resources appear unwasted and unwasting. There are men who have studied this volume most thoroughly and intensely, and who, the more they have studied, have been the more deeply convinced that it is a fathomless profound of light and knowledge. There are those who have made it the chief object of their investigation for half a century; who have studiously examined every paragraph it contains some fifty or an hundred times, and who at every fresh perusal have discovered new thoughts and new sources for admiration and joy.

When Christopher Columbus on his voyage of discovery gazed upon the wide, vast, rolling flood of water which poured into the ocean by the river Orinoco, he exclaimed to those about him in his little ship: "That stream, comrades, never has come from an island; be sure it has gathered its giant waters from a mighty continent." It was soon proved that his reasoning was just, and attested his clear insight and sagacious intellect. Who, in the same way, can contemplate the riches of thought and inexhaustible fulness of truth that are found in the Scriptures, and refrain from drawing a similar conclusion? "This book, so boundless in resources, has never come from a created mind; it bears its own witness to a Divine origin; man is not its author, but man's Maker; its fulness betokens not the finite, but the infinite."

#### EXCLUSIVE IN CLAIM.

The Bible is *exclusive in its claims*. This is not true of the many religions of which the world has been, and is now, full. Such as have perished were all local



and fraternizing, and so are all that exist now, with perhaps the exception of the lingering shade of Judaism. If they dwell apart, they acknowledge each other respectfully as well adapted to their several districts. If they dwell side by side in the same community, they make similar acknowledgments of their adaptation to diverse classes. If their deities were all arranged around the rotunda of a modern Pantheon, they would smile on each other and repose together in perpetual peace. But the Gospel is exclusive and repulsive. It claims to be *the true religion* and the *only religion*. It claims to be "worthy of *all* acceptance." It declares all other religions false and foul. It abhors any compliments from them. It disdains any participation with them. It denounces them all as execrable impositions, and dooms them all to utter destruction. What an attitude this for any system of truth to assume, which was founded by a young Jew, who lived homeless and friendless and died upon the cross, and who engaged to publish and recommend His religion, not the wise, the learned and the eloquent, but plain, unlettered men, penniless and powerless, who were unknown to fame, and whose names, now never to be forgotten, were never pronounced by those who constitute the schools of earthly wisdom!

#### UNIVERSAL ADAPTATION.

The Bible is distinguished by *universality of adaptation*. It is the book of the human soul, made by Him who made the soul, and so made it in His wisdom that all its verities correspond with the wants, the wishes and the happiness of which the soul is most conscious. It is a glass in which man sees himself. It is the



voice of God communing with the Spirit which He once made in His own image, to wake up its faculties into a resurrection of their own departed strength, and to restore it to the Divine favor and fellowship forfeited by sin. The religion it reveals is a religion for the race.

Every other assumed revelation, as has just been hinted, has been addressed to but one phase of humanity. They have been adapted to one age, to one people or one peculiar style of human thought. Their books have never assumed a cosmical character or been capable of any catholic expansion. They could never be "accommodated" to other ages, or acclimated to other parts of the world. They are indigenous plants that can never grow out of the zone that gave them birth. They relate entirely and exclusively to the peculiarities of the region or district in which they originated. The religion of the Hindoo, for example, is evidently a religion for Hindostan alone. The religion of the Egyptian is evidently a religion for Egypt, and the religion of Mahomet is evidently local in its adaptation.

How different is Christianity! There is no region of the earth where it cannot be instituted; the man does not live to whom it may not be preached, and by whom it may not forthwith be enjoyed. It is simple in its nature, spiritual in its requirements, and divine in all its resources. Its truth is such as to instruct at once the illustrious Newton and the "Dairyman's Daughter," and its themes are such as both Milton and the "Shepherd of Salisbury Plain" can dwell on with delight. One of the acutest and most spiritual of all the commentators on the New Testament was

the learned Bengel. We are told that when he was dying he said to the young man who was his nurse that night : " My young friend, give me some word of Scriptural consolation." The young man stammered and blushed, and said : " I cannot speak any word of consolation to such a great master in theology." " What ? " said Bengel, " a theological student not able to speak a word of comfort to a dying man ? " Then the student gathered himself up and stammered out : " The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The great man smiled and said : " Oh ! that is just what I wanted. It never sounded so sweet to me before as now." And yet the humblest peasant in all Germany who had savingly believed in Jesus could take the comfort of that just as well as Bengel. Thus it is with the Gospel. It suits every clime, color and condition. The Government does not exist under which it will not survive. Peculiarities, geographical, local or national, cannot be found by which it would be set at naught. Being a universal remedy, it operates in every temperature and latitude. Requiring no aid from the civil power, assuming no position or rank among the authorities of the world, it may yet be borne by the missionary with hope of success to the rough-clad Huron amongst the ice-bound lakes, to the reclining, effeminate Asiatic, amid the fountains and odorific groves of his country, to the pigmy Laplander, along the consolidated surface of his snow, or to the inhabitants of the sunny islands of the southern seas.

The Bible is characterized by *increased vigor*. Other religions, after they exist for a century or two, give signs of inanition and feebleness ; the frailty of age is upon them, but the strength of Christianity grows with

its years ; it is not subject to the wasting influences of time—age brings with it no feebleness, centuries write no wrinkles on its brow. After eighteen centuries the dew of its youth is upon it. It is not content to slumber in any territory. It aims to acquire new dominion—even to complete the conquest of the world. In distant parts of the earth it now flashes forth the sign of hope to the nations, and still its watchword is : “*Amplius! Amplius!*”—further, still further. Onward—onward, while there is a spot of earth unexplored or a child of man unsaved. The graves of many who sought to extend its beneficent influence are found on heathen soil, while those who are its enemies enjoy at home its temporal blessings with base ingratitude, and even fill their purses with revenue from their bold and bad assaults upon it.

## ELEVENTH LETTER.

SIR: Before directing your attention to the argument from *Prophecy* for the superhuman origin of the Bible, let me remind you that this source of evidence is peculiar to the Holy Scriptures. Nothing like it is found anywhere beside, and it accords perfectly with that system that nothing similar should be found elsewhere. Heathenism never made any clear and well-founded pretensions to this species of evidence. Mohammedanism, though it stands itself a proof of the truth of Scripture prophecy, is unsupported by a single prediction of its own. To the Christian only belongs this testimony of his faith, this *growing* evidence gathering strength by length of time, and affording from age to age fresh proofs of its Divine origin. As a majestic river expands itself more and more the farther it removes from its source; so prophecy, issuing from the first promise in Paradise as its fountain-head, acquired additional strength as it rolled down successive ages, and will still go on increasing in extent and grandeur, until it shall finally lose itself in the ocean of eternity.

Only a few of the predictions of Scripture, necessarily, can now pass under our notice, and even these must receive but a succinct and summary review.

### THE JEWS.

In considering the prophecies respecting the Jews we select those which are contained in the writings of

Moses, and to which the declarations of the later prophets give additional body and coloring, touching the future calamities of the nation.

#### CONQUEST OF THEIR COUNTRY.

“The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the ends of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance.” “He shall eat the fruit of thy cattle and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed” (Deut. xxviii. 49–51). In these words it is impossible not to see a description of the Romans, who were not neighbors to the Jews, as the Philistines, the Syrians and the Egyptians were, but had established the seat of their government at a great distance in Italy, who were distinguished by the extent and rapidity of their conquests, spoke a language totally different from that of Judea, first reduced the country into the form of a province and afterwards laid it waste in the reign of the Emperor Vespasian.

#### THEIR DREADFUL SUFFERINGS AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST.

“He shall not regard the persons of the old, nor show favor to the young.” “He shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee” (Deut. xxviii. 50, 53). Let Josephus, an eye-witness, prove how awfully this prediction was verified in the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children

by their un pitying foes, and in the dreadful famine which the wretched inhabitants suffered during the siege of Jerusalem. He relates one instance, and there might be many, of a woman who ate the flesh of her own child, and he says "that no other city ever suffered such things, as no generation from the beginning of the world so much abounded in wickedness."

#### THEIR CAPTIVITY IN EGYPT.

"And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you" (Deut. xxviii. 68). Josephus informs us that when the city of Jerusalem was taken the captives who were above seventeen years of age were sent to the works in Egypt, but so little care was taken of these captives that eleven thousand of them perished for want. There is every probability, though the historian does not mention the fact, that they were conveyed to Egypt in ships, as the Romans had then a fleet in the Mediterranean. The market was so overstocked that there were no purchasers, and they were sold for the merest trifle.

#### DISPERSION OF THE NATION.

"And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deut. xxviii. 64). Everybody knows that this prediction has been fulfilled, and that the present state of the Jews exactly corresponds with it. They have no country, no province, no city which they can call their own, but for more than eighteen centuries have been strangers and wanderers, yet remain distinct.

## THEIR SERVING OTHER GODS.

“There shalt thou serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known—wood and stone” (Deut. xxviii. 64). This prediction was long since fulfilled in the fate of the ten tribes, who, wherever they reside, have adopted the false religion of the heathen among whom they sojourn, and has been fulfilled in that part of the Jews, who were more recently dispersed by the Romans, for it is well known that in popish countries, particularly in Spain and Portugal, many of them, to avoid persecution, have conformed to the established religion and become worshippers of images.

## THEIR SOCIAL OSTRACISM.

It was foretold that they should “become an astonishment, a proverb and a by-word among all nations, and that their plagues should be wonderful” (Deut. xxviii. 37). How has this prediction been, and how is it still, fulfilled in every country? Surely the judgments visited on this people have been wonderful and of long continuance. The whole prophecy is truly wonderful, and affords a striking proof of the Divine prescience, when we reflect that it was delivered fifteen hundred years before the events, and foretold the rejection of the Jews at the very same time when God was taking them to be His peculiar people.

Look now at the prophecies respecting the nations in contact with Israel, and from time to time their conquerors or oppressors.

## EDOM.

Edom should cease to be a people. “Thus saith the Lord God, because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly



offended and revenged himself upon them. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom and will cut off man and beast from it, and I will make it desolate from Teman, and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury, and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxv. 12-14). "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them and devour them, and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it" (Obad. i. 18).

Now the Idumeans, as is well known, literally ceased to be a people, being so thoroughly subdued by John Hyrcanus as to be obliged to conform to the law of Moses, and to be, to the entire loss of their nationality, absorbed by the Jews. Thirty ruined towns, within three days' journey of the Red Sea, attest the former greatness of this people. The present condition of themselves and their country is one of utter desolation. Edom lies in the most direct route to India, but none "shall pass through it forever and ever," predicted Isaiah (xxxiv. 10), and, "even the Arabs," says Keith, "are afraid to enter it, or conduct any within its borders." The people who visit it are described as a most savage and treacherous race, and so the prophet Malachi foretold, "Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down, and they shall call them the

border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever" (Is. i. 4). The desolation of Edom is said to be perpetual (Jer. xlix. 7-22), and travellers state that the whole country is a vast expanse of sand drifted up from the Red Sea.

#### TYRE.

"Tyre," says Volney, "was once the emporium of the world; the theatre of an immense commerce and navigation, the nursery of arts and science, and the city of perhaps the most industrious and active people ever known." Situate at the entry of the sea, she was a merchant of the people for many isles. All nations were her merchants in all sorts of things. The ships of Tarshish did sing of her in the market, and she was replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas (Ezek. xxvii.) It was of this mistress of princes that Ezekiel prophesied in the name of the Lord: "I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea" (Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5). How singularly particular! She was not only to be utterly destroyed, but the use that would be made of her site and the kind of men who would inhabit it were pointed out more than a thousand years before her complete destruction. How precise the fulfilment! Shaw, in his book of travels, describes the port of Tyre as so choked up that the boats of the fishermen, who now and then come to the place and dry their nets upon its rocks and ruins, can hardly enter. Bruce describes the site of Tyre as "a rock whereon fishers dry their nets." But the testimony of the infidel, Volney, is more valuable. "The whole village of Tyre contains only fifty or sixty

poor families, who live obscurely on the produce of their little ground and a trifling fishery."

## EGYPT.

The prophecies relating to Egypt, and their fulfilment, demand the most attentive consideration. They were uttered when the Pharaohs were at their height of power. Then did Joel commence the mournful strain, "Egypt shall be a desolation" (Joel iii. 19). And Isaiah took it up: "The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord" (xix. 4). And Jeremiah and Ezekiel, when the catastrophe was nearer, describe with terrible peculiarity, not only the judgments which would be inflicted in their days, but how Egypt should "be a base kingdom," and "there be no more a prince of the land of Egypt" (Jer. xlv. ; Ezek. xxx.) How accurately these threatenings have been accomplished is evident from the fact that that land has for two thousand years lost its independence, being subject to foreign domination, and from the poverty and wretchedness of its inhabitants amidst the stupendous monuments of its ancient greatness.

## BABYLON.

The fate of Babylon was foretold in the following words:—"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tents there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and

owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places, and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged" (Is. xiii. 19-22). The destruction of a city so extensive, containing magnificent buildings and surrounded by lofty walls, could have been effected suddenly only by an earthquake. It was the work of time, but every particular has been fulfilled. For centuries the very place where it once stood, the wonder of the world, was unknown. If modern travellers, who think they have discovered it, are right, it is an awful monument of the truth and power of God. It is a mass of ruins, and nothing but ruins, covering the face of the country for miles, and amidst these they have heard the cry of wild beasts, and seen them roaming in their solitary domain. Other particulars connected with its doom are specified, that it should be besieged by the Medes and Persians (Is. xxi. 2; Jer. li. 11); that the Euphrates, which flowed through the midst of it, should be dried up (Is. xlv. 27; Jer. l. 38; li. 36); that its gates should be open to Cyrus, its conqueror (Is. xlv. 1); that it should be taken during the dissipation and security of a feast (Jer. li. 39, 57), and that the country around it should be turned into a marsh (Is. xlv. 22, 23). How exactly these things were accomplished we learn from the writings of Xenophon and Herodotus.

#### NINEVEH.

A still larger city, and no less signal as a monument of Divine power, was Nineveh, a place as ancient as Asshur, the son of Shem, and at one time nearly sixty

miles round. This city abounded in wealth and pride. "I am," said she, "and there is none beside me" (Zeph. ii. 15). Jonah was therefore sent to foretell her ruin, and, though she repented, yet within a few years Nahum was commissioned to repeat the message; a hundred years later still, but fifty before the city fell, Zephaniah again foretold its overthrow with the utmost literalness. Nor did the prediction fail. Pages might be filled in describing the gorgeous relics of this mighty Nineveh. But the story, most interesting, is yet a melancholy one. There are inscriptions telling of world-wide conquests; there are sculptures which represent the conduct, the success, the cruelties of war; there are royal pastimes depicted, the excitement of the chase, the luxury of banquets; there are the symbols of a strange worship—these and a thousand other particulars might be detailed. But all this grandeur and this glory had a disastrous end, shattered, not calmly and gradually sinking, but violently crushed, and the marks of the fire which devastated those lordly halls are yet apparent. The narrative of the destruction of the city by the historian Diodorus Siculus reads more like history than prediction. And Lucian, who flourished in the second century after Christ, and was himself a native of that region, affirms that it had utterly perished, and that there was no footstep of it remaining. "Thus saith the Lord God . . . . I have . . . . delivered him into the hand of the mighty ones of the heathen . . . . and strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him. . . . Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches. . . . In the day when he went

down to the grave I caused a mourning. . . . I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit. . . . They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword, and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen" (Ezek. xxxi. 10-17). Surely there is here in the history and fate of Nineveh a lesson read us, not only of the nothingness of man and his greatest works before the breath of the Almighty, but also of the strong corroborative evidence of the accurate truth of Holy Scripture.

#### OF THE MESSIAH.

The prophetic promise of Messiah, it should be observed, is quite different from what natural or national prepossessions would have imagined. We might suppose the dim ideal of a future conqueror and king, with an anticipation that the destiny of Israel would have its highest prosperity under his sway. And prophecy accordingly describes the glories which should encompass One whose throne should be established in righteousness, and whose rule should comprehend the kings of the earth. But along with such a description there runs continually a darker augury: from the very first intimation of a Seed of the woman, the bruising of his heel is prognosticated (Gen. iii. 15); and there is the constant witness to mysterious bloodshedding, and foreshadowings of unutterable sorrow to be endured, and shame, and rejection, and death, so that those who most anxiously looked for the fulfilment of the nation's, of the world's, hope, were most reluctant to admit that such humiliation could touch



the promised One, and even in the anticipation of his reign they had shaped out a far different sovereignty, unconscious of the great principle on which future spiritual glories are delineated in language taken from the earthly fortunes of their royal house. Now here is a whole system of prophetic declaration, foretelling what human thought would have been least likely to conceive, while the fulfilment came in a form so marvellously strange as to contradict all foregone conclusions, and yet so satisfactory as to engage men for the truth of it to resign all they would naturally covet, and seal the belief of it with their blood. The accomplishment of prophecy in the birth, the rejection, the death, the resurrection of Christ is complete.

When all is said which the most ingenious of sceptics can say, observes an able writer, the picture of One guiltless Himself, suffering for the sins of His people, without complaint, and by His own death, as one numbered with the transgressors, bearing the iniquity of all, and making His soul an offering for sin, through whose stripes His people are healed (Isaiah liii. throughout), remains a most wonderful anticipation, fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and in Him alone. It remains an anticipation, of which, even by itself, it is most difficult to explain the origin. And this most strange anticipation is fulfilled, after some centuries have passed with no semblance of its realization. It is fulfilled, but not until the popular mind in Israel has formed a most opposite ideal of the coming Saviour. And lastly, it is fulfilled in the most wonderful of all histories, of all characters, of all persons.

If we admit that a Divine Teacher first created the



expectation, and then in due time fulfilled it by the gift of His Son, all is explained. But what other supposition can account, first, for the hope so strangely awakened, then for the wonderful Person and history which fulfilled that hope? And this too when the desire and expectation of Israel had come to concentrate itself almost exclusively upon the hope of the Conqueror, who should restore and enlarge the kingdom of David and of Solomon, and place the oppressors of Israel beneath its feet.

#### DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

We only add the prophecy of our Lord Himself concerning the time when the holy house of Jerusalem should be desolate (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38; Luke xix. 41-44).

Jesus had uttered in the temple, in the hearing of a mixed multitude, a pathetic lamentation over the distress that awaited the Jewish nation. As He goes out of the temple towards the Mount of Olives, the usual place of His retirement, the disciples, struck with the expression He had used, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," as if to move His compassion and mitigate the sentence, point out to Him, while He passed along, the buildings of the temple, and the goodly stones and gifts with which it was adorned. The great temple which Solomon had built was destroyed at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Cyrus permitted the two tribes, who returned to Judea, to rebuild the house of their God. And this second temple was repaired and adorned by Herod the Great, who, having received the crown of Judea from the Romans, thought that the most effectual way of

overcoming the prejudices, and obtaining the favor of the Jewish people, was by beautifying and enlarging, after the plan of Solomon's temple, the building which had been hastily erected in the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. It was still accounted the second temple, but was so much improved by the preparation which Herod made, that both Josephus and the Roman historians celebrate the extent, the beauty, and the splendor, of the building. And Josephus mentions, in particular, marble stones of a stupendous size in the foundation, and in different parts of the building. The disciples, we may suppose, point out these stones, lamenting the destruction of such a fabric, or perhaps meaning to insinuate that it would not be easy for the hand of man to destroy it. But Jesus answered, "Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." It is a proverbial saying, marking the complete destruction of the temple, and there would not, according to the general analogy of language, have been any impropriety in the use of it, if the temple had been rendered unfit for being a place of worship, although piles of stones had been left standing in the court. But, by the providence of God, even this proverbial expression was fulfilled, according to the literal acceptation of the words. Titus was most solicitous to preserve so splendid a monument of the victories of Rome, and he sent a message to the Jews who had enclosed themselves in the temple, that he was determined to save it from ruin. But they could not bear that the house of their God, the pride and glory of their nation, should fall into the hands of the heathen, and they set fire to the porticos. A soldier,

observing the flames, threw a burning brand in at the window, and others incensed at the obstinate resistance of the Jews, without regard to the commands or threatenings of their general, who ran to extinguish the flames, continued to set fire to different parts of it, and at length even to the doors of the holy place. "And thus," says Josephus, "the temple was burnt to the ground, against the will of Titus." After it was in this way rendered useless, he ordered the foundations, probably on account of the unusual size of the stones, to be dug up. And Rufus, who commanded the army after his departure, executed this order, by tearing them up with a ploughshare, so truly did Micah say of old, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps."

To all these predictions the words of a modern writer are applicable: "Let now the infidel, or the sceptical reader, meditate upon these predictions. The priority of the records to the events admits of no question. The completion is obvious to every competent inquirer. These, then, are facts. We are called upon to account for these facts on rational and adequate principles. Is human foresight equal to the task? Enthusiasm? Conjecture? Chance? Political contrivance? If none of those, neither can any other principle that may be devised by man's sagacity account for the facts; then, true philosophy, as well as true religion, will ascribe them to the inspiration of the Almighty. Every effect must have a cause."

Beyond all question, "the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

## TWELFTH LETTER.

SIR: The evidence of miracles now claims your attention.

### A MIRACLE DEFINED.

We may define a miracle as an event contrary to the ordinary course of things, an effect for which natural causes are not alone sufficient: so that God must have interposed to suspend or modify the common laws of nature. Such event or effect produced by God's immediate touch or special assistance is intended as a proof of some particular truth or doctrine, or in attestation of the authority or divine mission of some particular person.

### MIRACLES POSSIBLE.

To the Pantheist, who denies the existence of a personal God above the world—of God as the Creator and Ruler of the world, miracles, of course, are an impossibility. The same thing is true of the Deist, who maintains that since the creation the natural forces and laws which God established have been the efficient and determining cause of the course of the world,—God Himself having, as it were, retired to a position of rest, and only looking on, to see how the world, called into being by Him and ruled according to unalterable laws, moves on. According to this theory, natural law is made to be even for the Creator an impassable barrier. But this view, says an eminent

writer, is at utter variance with the entire constitution of the world, of nature, and of the human heart. Nature is not a stiff, iron legalism, which absolutely excludes the free ruling and interposition of God. It is by no means a mere mechanism, a nicely defined piece of clock-work, which winds itself up every day or year, but it resembles a well-ordered commonwealth, in which laws reign most surely, but such laws as leave play-room for the free-will. And so nature *must* be constituted, if it is to be the dwelling-place of man—of man endowed with free-will. Only when so constituted can it allow in it the exercise of a will that chooses among different possibilities and controls the event in nature to the attaining of its purposes. But if the free action of the human will is recognized, and room is found for it inside the laws of nature, why should just the Creator be excluded from such free acting and ruling? As man in a peculiar way combines and disposes the forces in nature to his purposes, so that a result is produced which would never have been produced from the mere working together of the natural laws, so, only in an infinitely higher sense, God disposes the events in the world to His purposes. The entire constitution of the world, consequently, does not exclude the free ruling of God, the divine government of the world; on the contrary, it is so devised as from the beginning to have that in view. "After all," as Dr. Charles Hodge has well observed, "the suspension or violation of the laws of nature involved in miracles is nothing more than is constantly taking place around us. One force counteracts another; vital force keeps the chemical laws of matter in abeyance, and muscular force can control the action of physical force. When

a man raises a weight from the ground, the law of gravity is neither suspended nor violated, but counteracted by a stronger force. The same is true as to the walking of Christ on the water, and the swimming of the iron at the command of the prophet."

Then, again, as already hinted, the human heart, also, is so constituted that it must believe in the world-ruling God, as long as it believes itself. The human heart, as soon as it knows of a Creator and Lord of the world, cannot help praying to this God. That would be an absurdity and a contradiction, if the course of the world occurs according to unalterable laws, which form an insurmountable barrier even for God, if everything proceeds according to blind necessity. But the innermost voice of our own nature, of which we have the immediate assurance it cannot deceive, tells us that God's hands are not bound by natural law, but that He freely rules the world and directs all according to His counsel. Therefore we pray. Can that be delusion? Can this prayer-impulse, with which every man, even the denier of miracles, is involuntarily affected, when trouble presses hard upon the soul,—can it be deception, or as the catching of a drowning man at a straw? No! it is a remnant of the truth in the human heart, which, when the earnestness of life brushes from the eyes the cobwebs of idle theories, stands out clear and distinct before the spirit. This is the remnant of truth which, after every suppression, rises again, and bursts through all doubts, denials, and negations—the remnant of truth, without which human life would be comfortless and hopeless, a lightless wandering in darkness. Where is there a praying heart, the expression of which would not with a thousand voices attest,



Prayers have their influence—they do not, as sound, die away in empty space? That could not be if the world's course were a mere mechanism.

#### BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL IS NATURAL.

The universal belief in miracles and the marvellous, the ease with which such things are credited by men, the most enlightened as well as the unenlightened, statesmen, jurists, ecclesiastics, law-givers, sages—Socrates, Coke, Bacon, Hale, among numberless others—shows that a belief in the supernatural and the marvellous, instead of being contrary to the laws of the human mind, is rather in accordance with some law of our nature that *looks* for such interventions, and seeks and expects to be gratified. It may be added, also, that this proves that men would naturally *expect* such an intervention if a revelation were to be made to mankind.

#### MORAL ENDS OF MIRACLES.

“Whatever ends,” says an excellent writer, “may be contemplated by the Deity for the laws of nature in reference to the rest of the universe—(a question in which we have as little information as interest)—we know that in respect to *us*, they answer discernible moral ends—that they place us, practically, under government, conducted in the way of rewards and punishment—a government of which the *tendency* is to encourage virtue and repress vice—and to form in us a certain character by discipline, which character our moral nature compels us to consider as the highest and worthiest object which we can pursue. Since, therefore, the laws of nature have, in reference to us, moral



purposes to answer, which (as far as we can judge) they have not to serve in other respects, it seems not incredible that these peculiar purposes should occasionally require modifications of those laws in relation to us, which are not necessary in relation to other parts of the universe."

## HUME'S ARGUMENT.

Mr. Hume, in his famous Essay, resolves the peculiar improbability of miracles, into the circumstance that they are "contrary to experience." His argument is, that no testimony ever has been produced, or can be produced, strong enough to countervail the universal experience of mankind against miraculous interposition. This, however, is really a *petitio principii*. The experience is assumed to be uniform only upon testimony, so that testimony and experience cannot be thus pitted one against the other. Besides, the experience that is for miracles is destroyed, in order to make out experience against miracles. The experience of the Apostles and their contemporaries was, as they have left on record, that miracles had been witnessed by them. So that the matter comes to a question of testimony at last, whether the testimony of those who declare that miracles were within their experience is to be overborne by the testimony of those who maintain that experience is against them. And, let it be observed, these testimonies are not fairly balanced unless the affirmative of eye-witnesses is met by the negative of eye-witnesses too, present at the same time, who could say that no miracle could have been performed without their perceiving it, and that they did not so perceive it. Indeed, the experience relied on by the

objector comes, when it is sifted, to be the experience of a single individual, who disbelieves what others tell him from their experience, because he has not seen it with his own eyes—has not had experience of it himself. The legitimate conclusion from such a principle would be the destruction of all belief save that which was forced on a man by the evidence of his own senses. His own experience is against a thousand things in every-day life, which he accepts without question upon another's credit, and acts accordingly.

#### THE TIMING OF THE BIBLE MIRACLES.

It is interesting, as well as profitable, to consider the *timing* of the miracles of the Bible. This thing grows on one who studies the record of them. As thus viewed, they are not a confused jumble of strange events. Each takes its place, its *own* place, and it is seen that it could not have come in at any other time. No two of these miracles can change places. The flood does its work at its own epoch. Abraham's attempted sacrifice is the event for that hour, and for no other. No Old Testament miracle could have occurred in New Testament times. Those that appear somewhat alike are so only in appearance. The New Testament miracles are exactly ordered as to the point where they occurred. They are progressive. The "raising of Lazarus" could not change places with the "turning of the water into wine," except by an entire destruction not only of the Gospel story but also of the harmony of Christ's own character. He could not, being the Christ He is, have invented this order, if He would be understood by men. Embosomed in a family known only in the social circles of a Galilean

province, it was exactly fit that His first miracle should be the *consecration of domestic life*. But the grand resurrection miracle was best done near Jerusalem, just when all teaching and all miracle were culminating at the close of His ministry.

#### MIRACLES RECORDED BY CONTEMPORARIES.

The miracles of the Bible were recorded by contemporaries—Moses, the author of Exodus, and the Evangelists, who published their accounts when Christianity had its origin. These writers were certainly in a position to know the truth. Moses was the leader of Israel, taking part, indeed, having the command, in all things that were done. The Evangelists, too, were some of them Apostles, always about the person of Christ, professing to be eye-witnesses of what they told; others were known to be trusted companions of the Apostles. They all had full means of information. Now, if untrue accounts of things are put forth by contemporaries, there is every probability of their being at once contradicted. The children of Israel must have known whether they passed dry-shod through the Red Sea: they were inclined to murmur and resist Moses, so that, when he frequently referred to that event, we can hardly conceive of their acquiescing in what he said, if he had given a false coloring to an ordinary fact. Moreover, a deep impression seems to have been made on neighboring nations (Joshua ii. 9–11). It was their interest to have the falsehood, if falsehood there were, exposed, and yet, so far as we can discover, there was no attempt of this kind. Take, again, some of the remarkable events narrated in our Lord's history, such as the raising of Lazarus, the casting out of devils,

the curing of the sick, the resurrection of Christ Himself. We do not find generally the facts controverted, but explained away. Thus, when the people, surprised at what they saw, exclaimed, "It was never so seen in Israel," the Pharisees declared, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils" (Matthew ix. 33, 34). The Jewish council, also, when Lazarus was raised, acknowledged, "This man doeth many miracles" (John xi. 47), and, to stifle the impression made upon the public mind, they consulted about putting Lazarus to death (John xii. 10, 11). Certainly the simplest course would have been, if the fact reported were untrue, to expose its falsity, instead of trying to destroy the evidence of its truth. Later, in regard to the Apostles, there is the same confession that a notable deed was manifestly done which could not be denied (Acts iv. 16). An attempt, to be sure, was made to discredit our Lord's resurrection, but the shift resorted to only proved the difficulty in which the chief priests felt themselves (Matthew xxviii. 11-15). So, then, neither at the time when the events occurred, nor a few years afterwards when the histories were published, were the Jews able to impeach the truth of the recital. They had full opportunity of testing the facts, and they had certainly the will to convict, if they could, the Christians of mistake or imposture. But we see that for a series of years, through that whole generation, the facts were fearlessly appealed to by Christian teachers—appealed to under just the circumstances and in the very places where exposure of falsehood was most easy (Acts vi. 8; viii. 6, 7, 13; xiv. 3; Rom. xv. 19; Heb. ii. 4).

## HISTORY OF MIRACLES GENUINE.

Again, the history of the New Testament miracles is so closely interwoven with the rest of the narration, that any man who reads it may be satisfied that it could not have been inserted after the books were published. There are numberless allusions to the miracles even in those passages where none of them are recorded. The change upon the sentiments of the first disciples is truly inexplicable, unless we suppose the miracles to have been done in their presence. All, therefore, who received the Gospels and the Acts in early times, when they could easily examine the truth of the facts, may be considered as setting their seal to the miracles of Jesus and His Apostles, and the number of the first converts out of Judea and Jerusalem forms, in this way, a cloud of witnesses. Nor should we overlook that confirmation of the testimony of the Apostles, which is implied in the faith of all the first Christians. We mean the epistles to the different churches. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, for example (the genuineness of which has never been disputed), was written not twenty years after the ascension of Jesus, and in it he tells those to whom it was addressed, and in whose church it was to be read, that they had been converted to the Gospel by the miracles of those who preached it, and that the effect which this conversion had produced upon their conduct was talked of everywhere. If these facts had not been known to the Thessalonians, would not the letter have been instantly rejected, and the character of him who wrote it have sunk into contempt?

MIRACLES ADMITTED BY EARLY OPPONENTS OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

It is observable, also, that in the early ages, the fact that extraordinary miracles were wrought by Jesus and His Apostles, does not seem to have been generally denied by the opponents of Christianity. They seem always to have preferred adopting the expedient of ascribing them to art magic and the power of evil spirits. This we learn from the New Testament itself, from such writings as the *Sephen Toldoth Jeshu*, from the Fragments of Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, Julian, etc., which have come down to us, and from the popular objections which the ancient Christian Apologists felt themselves concerned to grapple with. We are not to suppose, however, that this would have been a solution, which, even in those days, would have been naturally preferred to a denial of the facts, if the facts could have been plausibly denied. On the contrary, it was plainly, even then, a forced and improbable solution of *such* miracles. For man did not commonly ascribe to magic or evil demons an *unlimited* power, any more than we ascribe an unlimited power to mesmerism, imagination, and the occult and irregular forces of nature.

## INDIRECT TESTIMONY OF MIRACLES.

Over and above the direct testimony of human witnesses to the Bible-miracles, we have also what may be called the indirect testimony of events confirming the former, and raising a distinct presumption that some such miracles must have been wrought. Thus, for example, we know, by a copious induction, that, in no nation of the ancient world, and in no nation of



the modern world unacquainted with the Jewish or Christian revelation, has the knowledge of the one true God as the Creator and Governor of the world, and the public worship of Him, been kept up by the mere light of nature, or formed the ground-work of such religions as men have devised for themselves. Yet we do find that, in the Jewish people, though no way distinguished above others by mental power or high civilization, and with as strong natural tendencies as others, this knowledge and worship was kept up from a very early period of their history, and, according to their uniform historical tradition, kept up by revelation attested by undeniable miracles.

Again, the existence of the Christian religion, as the belief of the most considerable and intelligent part of the world, is an undisputed fact. It is also certain that this religion originated (as far as human means are concerned) with a handful of Jewish peasants, who went about preaching on the very spot where the events had occurred, that Jesus wrought miracles, and Himself rose from the dead. These statements, if false, could easily have been disproved,—why were they not? How was it, that on the strength of them, these plain men, amidst persecution, too, gathered, before they died, large churches in the country where the facts were best known, and through Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, and Italy?

#### REALITY OF BIBLE MIRACLES.

It is a strong evidence of the *reality* of the miracles of the Bible, that Science, so far as it has gone, has demonstrated that, if the facts occurred, they cannot be explained by the laws of nature, or that they could



not have been wrought by any physical *laws*. "Very many things once deemed supernatural and miraculous have been shown to be the production of the ordinary laws of nature, and have thus been removed from the region of the marvellous, and have taken their places among things well understood as being in accordance with regular laws. Eclipses, meteors, comets, earthquakes, the lightning, *ignis fatuus*—things that once alarmed mankind, have thus to a great extent taken their places in the ordinary course of events. *Æsculapius* is no longer worshipped as the god of medicine, for it is no longer supposed that there is any direct and supernatural divine agency in the healing art, nor are Ceres or Neptune worshipped as if supernatural divine power were manifested in the rearing of fruits, or in regulating the storm, or in the ebbing and the flowing of the waters of the sea. The magician has given way to the chemist working by established laws. Marvels and wonders, therefore, have been greatly limited and diminished by placing these events under the operation of the regular rules of nature. But Science has *not* advanced so far, as to explain the miracles of the New Testament on any human principles, as it has in these matters, nor has it made any approximation to it. Nay, just so far as it has gone it has demonstrated that those miracles cannot be explained on any principles known, or likely to be known, to science—gravitation, attraction, repulsion, electricity, galvanism, or the healing properties of vegetables or minerals. The chemist does not open the eyes of the blind by a touch, he does not heal the sick by a word, he does not raise the dead by the blow-pipe or by galvanism."

## MIRACLES ATTEST A REVELATION.

The question—"Are miracles sufficient to attest a revelation?" remains to be considered. There are those who maintain that there is no necessary connection between truth and power. Such persons admit miracles are possible, and suspect no intention in the Deity to deceive; but they cannot, they say, place confidence in the fidelity of His messengers, or, at least, they have no assurance that they would honestly deliver their message, and religiously abstain from adding to it or taking from it. They might alter it to serve a particular purpose, and might employ the miraculous power by which they are invested to give authority and currency to imposture. The answer to this objection is obvious. It is God alone that can work miracles. This is a dictate of nature. Miracles, being supernatural works, can only be performed by Him to whom belongeth all power. We are not to suppose, for example, in the case of the Prophets and Apostles, that miraculous powers were communicated to them, to be properly their own, and to be exerted by them as they exerted their natural faculties. These men were merely instruments in the hands of God. They acknowledged themselves so to be. Moses says of himself, that he "stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." And "Why," said Peter and John, "look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? The name of Jesus, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know." The power to work miracles being in God, and not in

His servants, they could not abuse it, because, to speak strictly, they never possessed it. They were, we repeat, merely the instruments of the miracles which God was pleased to work by His immediate power. Unless, therefore, we can believe that God would attest by miracles what is false, we are forced to the conclusion that the miracles recorded in the Bible carry with them irresistible evidence that it is truth, and, not only so, but truth divinely revealed.

### THIRTEENTH LETTER.

SIR: The aspect of the Bible to which I now desire to direct your attention is *the support which it receives from collateral evidence*. It is a fearless Book. It puts its incidental historical narratives by the side of ancient records, wherever these are found—on brick cylinders, graven in rocks, traced upon the pavements, carved upon obelisks, built into imperial structures, and it challenges comparison. No matter how other records have come to us, the Scripture puts its records beside them, asserts its truth, and waits for centuries for its vindication. It everywhere inserts its alleged facts into the plane of contemporaneous or nearly contemporaneous events without the smallest hesitation, or preparation, or apology, or timidity, as though it was quite certain that none would or could challenge the accuracy of its representations. And how is this confidence sustained? No wonder is it that, although the opponents of Christianity, from the time of Voltaire to Colenso downwards, held that the books were the fraudulent inventions of a later age, and this assumption long reigned among the sceptics in England, France and Germany, yet when Layard began to dig, and Botta began to read, and Rawlinson began to expound, this theory was abandoned,—the historic reality was admitted, and only the supernatural element denied. Let some particulars be noted.

## ASSYRIAN TABLETS.

F. Vigoureux, an able writer, in a work recently published in Paris, in referring to the great discovery of the Assyrian tablets, says:—"These tablets agree with Genesis in stating that the heavens existed before the earth; that the latter was at first a chaos; that out of this abyss proceeded the organized world. . . . There is also mention made of a revolt in heaven."

Another eminent scholar, Mr. George Smith, of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, British Museum, who, when excavating at Nineveh, in 1873, discovered fragments of tablets which he afterwards recognized as a part of the *Chaldean Story of the Creation*, says:—"It here appears that the Babylonian Story of the Creation substantially agrees, as far as it is preserved, with the Biblical account. According to it there was a chaos of watery matter before the creation, and from this all things were generated. . . . There is also reference to the creation of mankind, called Adam, as in the Bible, he is made perfect and instructed in his various religious duties, but afterwards he joins with the dragon of the deep, the spirit of chaos, and offends against his God, who curses him and calls down on his head all the evils and troubles of humanity."

## PRIMITIVE CONDITION OF MAN.

In relation to the primitive condition of man Hesiod speaks of "the Golden Age, when men lived the life of the gods—a life free from care and without labor or sorrow." Plato says "there was once an earth-born race whom the Deity himself tended and watched over." In the *Zendavesta*, Yima, the first Iranic king, "lives in a secluded spot, where he and his people enjoy un-

interrupted happiness." In the ancient books of the Chinese we read that "during the period of the first heaven the whole creation enjoyed a state of happiness; everything was beautiful, everything was good, all beings were perfect in their kind." Not only, according to Humboldt, is it "not difficult to detect through all the embellishments of the Hindu stories the tradition of *the descent of mankind from a single pair*," but the Brahman and the Buddhist have preserved some recollections of the nature of the spot in which the first inhabitants of the earth were planted.

#### THE SABBATH.

The evidence of the Divine institution of the Sabbath is very strong. The measuring of time by a day and a night is pointed out to the common sense of mankind by the diurnal course of the sun. Lunar months and solar years are equally obvious to all rational creatures, so that the reason why time has been computed by days, months and years is readily given, but how the division of time into weeks of seven days, and this from the beginning, came to obtain universally among mankind no man can account for, without having respect to some impressions on the minds of men from the constitution and law of nature with the tradition of a Sabbatical rest from the foundation of the world. Plain intimations of this weekly revolution of time are to be found in the earliest Greek poets. Hesiod, who lived about nine hundred years before the coming of Christ, says "the seventh day is holy." Homer, who flourished about the same period, characterizes it "The sacred day," and so does Callimachus, who flourished in the region of Ptolemy Euergetes,

about seven hundred years later. In the old records of Assyria, in their account of the Creation, we also find the command to keep the seventh day holy, and to abstain from work on it.

#### THE FALL OF MAN.

The traditions of the Fall of Man are almost as widespread as the human family. The deep sense of the fact of man's expulsion from his first inheritance and the doctrines grounded on obscure traditions of the promised remedy are seen struggling, and now gleaming, now flashing through the mist of pantheism and producing the incongruities and gross contradictions of the Brahman mythology. In the Chinese mythology the serpent is a symbol of superior wisdom and power, and man's desire for knowledge, with the temptation of the woman, was his ruin. A very near resemblance is traceable between the Biblical record of man's first condition and the teaching of the Zendavesta. As there is a likeness in the history of Creation and in the description of Paradise, so there is a special similarity in the account of the Fall. According to the doctrine of Zoroaster, the first human beings, created by Ormuzd, the good principle, lived in a state of innocence in a happy garden with a tree which gave them life and immortality, but Ahriman, the evil principle, assuming the form of a serpent, offered them the fruit of a tree which he had himself created; they ate and became subject to evil and to a continual contest between light and darkness, between the good motions of Ormuzd and the evil suggestions of Ahriman.



## THE DELUGE.

The Scripture narrative of the deluge has remarkable confirmation, not only in the cuneiform account of it, but in the traditions of almost every nation. The following is found in a fragment of Berosus: "The god Kronos appeared to king Xisuthros, warned him of a destructive flood, and commanded him to write a comprehensive history of things and to bury it, and to make a vessel in which he and his friends might be preserved. Xisuthros obeyed, and, when the flood had somewhat abated, he sent out some birds a first, second, and third time. As they did not return, Xisuthros, finding that the ground was dry, with some of his party quitted his vessel, which was stranded on the side of an Armenian mountain, offered sacrifices to the gods, and disappeared. The rest of their company, as their friends did not return, also left the ship, and were admonished by a voice from heaven to repair to Babylon to dig up the writing that was buried, and to live piously."

Again, in China there is a tradition that a certain Fak-ke was preserved from an overwhelming deluge. He had a wife, three sons, and three daughters, and from them the world was replenished with people. There is also an Indian story, in various forms. Brhama, in one, is stated to have warned Manu, a righteous person, to build a ship, and place in it seven holy beings, and all kinds of seeds, as a flood was imminent. The ship is ultimately made fast to a lofty summit of the Himalaya mountains, and Manu is the parent of a new race of men. Nor are such traditions unknown in America. Coxcox or Terpi is said to have preserved his wife and children, with certain animals

and grain, during a deluge, in a large vessel. When the waters were abating he sent out various birds, of which one alone, the humming-bird, returned with a leafy branch. Coxcox landed near the mountain Colhuacan.

It is impossible to refer here to more of these traditional stories, which have been handed down in widely-separated regions of the earth, preserved sometimes in pictorial representations, or corroborated by coins—as in the medal struck in Apamea in Phrygia, about the time of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, in the third century after Christ, which not only commemorates the deluge, but exhibits Noah's name—interwoven with religious observances, or worked into the literature of a people, found to exist among those least civilized, and those most so. Is it possible that so many independent structures of fancy, modified indeed according to circumstances, but identical in the main fact, could exist, if there were no foundation, if there were not really some great event which has impressed itself through all the generations of mankind?

#### TOWER OF BABEL.

In regard to the Tower of Babel, the account given by the Chaldee historian Berosus, as we learn from the extracts in Eusebius and Polyhistor, agrees so remarkably with Genesis that Tuck and Rénan have affirmed that he borrowed from the Hebrew records; but this is disproved by the Babylonish monuments which, although much mutilated, still contain enough to show that Berosus drew from the veritable records of his own country. And the mighty ruin of Birs Nimroud or Borsippa is now verified by the researches of M.

Oppert as the site of the famous edifice which once sought to defy the King God. Even Schrader, who deems Genesis a legend, admits this. And the meaning given by Genesis as "confusion" is justified not only by Polyhistor and Abydenus but by Chaldean tradition.

#### ROUTE OF ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS.

Professor Dawson, Principal of McCall University, Montreal, in a late lecture on the explorations made recently by the Ordnance Survey of the Peninsula of Sinai, and the route of the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea, which were conducted by Captain Wilson and eight scientific English officers, said: "The Israelites made their march over three thousand years ago, and these surveys prove that the Book of Exodus was minutely accurate in every particular." The Rev. Canon Tristram, in a recent address before the British and Foreign Bible Society, also said: "In all those engineer officers who have worked for the Palestine Exploration Fund—in all those men who, like Professor Palmer and others, have gone through the desert of the Exodus—what do we see? There is not one man who, whatever views he may have held when he first went out there, has gone and given himself honestly to the work of discovering that country, who has not come back and put it under his seal that God is true, and that it is impossible that the history of the Exodus and the early history of Israel can be anything but minute historical detail. Is it for nothing that, where once we only knew 450 names of places in Palestine, we now have 2,770 names? Is it for nothing that there is scarcely a single town mentioned in Joshua

that we cannot now, with entire confidence, identify? I think that we should all feel that the utterances of one stone are worth all the speculations of philosophy." Mr. Tristram, in the same address, said: "You cannot go to the British Museum and look at that black obelisk of Tiglath Pileser, or the records of Sennacherib, you cannot go to Paris and gaze on that Moabite stone, you cannot read those cuneiform inscriptions, or read the translations, without seeing that it is impossible now to question the harmony of the Word of God with profane history as far back as history goes."

#### CITIES OF BASHAN.

It is said that in one small district of Bashan there were threescore great cities "fenced with high walls, gates, and bars," and sceptics have been ready to deride the credulity of such as would receive the statement as a literal fact. But travellers (among others, Dr. Porter, author of the *Giant Cities of Bashan*) have visited the region, and have found the cities, desolate, it is true, but still standing in their extraordinary grandeur, the massive walls there, the streets with their ancient pavement unbroken, the houses complete and habitable, as if finished only yesterday, and even the very doors and window-shutters in their places.

#### NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND BELSHAZZAR.

For a long time it had been questioned whether such a king as Nebuchadnezzar ever reigned. His name, it was said, did not appear in Herodotus, and objectors, ready to avail themselves of every opportunity of carping at the sacred volume, if they did not deny the existence of the conqueror, at least insinuated that a

petty satrap had been magnified into a great king. Now bricks in abundance have been disinterred inscribed with the mighty Nebuchadnezzar's name, and proving that there was indeed foundation for the boast that it was he that had built and adorned his magnificent capital (Dan. iv. 30). Yet more serious doubt was expressed in regard to Belshazzar, and consequently the narrative of his feast, and the awful sign which interrupted it, was pronounced a fable. But it is now distinctly proved by the discovery of unquestionable records that a sovereign of that name was associated in power with his father during the last days of Babylon's independence.

#### PAUL'S VOYAGE AND SHIPWRECK.

Take, again, the account of the great Apostle's voyage and shipwreck. A recent English writer has carefully investigated the localities; he has ascertained the character of the prevalent winds; he has calculated, after communication with experienced naval officers, the rate of drift and the direction a vessel would naturally take, and he finds the statement of Scripture *minutely* accurate. "A searching comparison," says he, "of the narrative with the localities where the events, so circumstantially related, are said to have taken place, with the aids which recent advances in our knowledge of the geography and the navigation of the eastern part of the Mediterranean supply, accounts for every transaction, clears up every difficulty, and exhibits an agreement so perfect in all its parts as to admit of but one explanation—namely, that it is a narrative of real events, written by one personally engaged in them."

## TESTIMONY OF A SCHOLAR.

It would be easy, Sir, to fill pages with particular examples of corroborative evidence of the truthfulness of Scripture derived from coins, tombs, ancient seals and monuments, which God's providence has uncovered to give living testimony of what occurred in ancient times. A most eminent scholar, after a careful survey of antiquarian research and discovery, says with representative voice,—“The monumental records of past ages—Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician,—the writings of historians who have based their history on contemporary annals, as Manietho, Berosus, Diodorus, Menander, Nicolas of Damascus, the descriptions given by eye-witnesses of the Oriental manners and customs, the proofs obtained by modern research of the condition of art in the time and country—all combine to confirm, illustrate and establish the veracity of the writers who have delivered to us the history of the chosen people.”

## TESTIMONY OF RÉNAN.

Even unbelieving Rénan feels it necessary to confess —“The striking accord between the texts and the places, the marvellous harmony of the Bible ideas with the country which serves them for a frame, was to me like a revelation.” Strong as is such testimony, it is not too strong. Nor Egypt, nor Phœnicia, nor Judea, nor the plains of Shinar, nor Young, nor Hamilton, nor Lewis, nor Layard, nor Rawlinson, nor Champollion, nor Botta, nor Lepsius, nor Bunsen, nor private explorers with their freedom and numbers, nor public commissioners going forth with public resources at command—none nor all of these have furnished a



single well-established fact against the Bible history. On the contrary, they have furnished immense corroboration,—corroboration which confirms in the clearest and strongest manner the truthfulness of those records which form the basis of the Christian system.”

#### THE BIBLE THE TOURIST'S BEST HAND-BOOK.

Such, indeed, Sir, is the minute faithfulness of the Bible, in all things connected with external scenes, that it forms the best possible hand-book of the tourist, and no candid man in traversing Biblical countries and observing their geography, botany and manners and customs can escape the conviction that its writers lived among and were perfectly familiar with the scenes which they describe. Hills and mountains, springs and brooks are just as Scripture has described them, and articles of food are still used such as Scripture mentions. Every great feature of the scene remains and presents itself to the eye of the modern traveler precisely as they were described by Moses and David, the prophets and apostles, and, with the exception of the cities and towns, which have changed or disappeared in the progress of time, one knows that he is looking upon the very scenes which their eyes beheld, and which they describe so faithfully that they are recognized at once after so many centuries have passed away. The land of the prophets and the wondrous people, the land of signs and wonders, remains as the writers of the Bible saw and described it.

With such facts as have now been presented the truthfulness of sacred history must be admitted, or all ancient history must be abandoned at once as false. To deny the credibility of the Old Testament writers



is not now to reject the Bible only, but it is to declare the State records of every ancient empire false.

HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL TRUTHFULNESS  
BLENDED.

Nor must it be forgotten that the proof of the historical accuracy of the writers of the Scriptures in the circumstances in which they wrote carries with it the truthfulness of their doctrines, unless we are prepared to believe that a perfect historical accuracy is connected with hypocrisy and dishonesty in doctrine. The fundamental doctrines of the Bible are all, more or less, connected with and woven into the facts of history, and, in many instances, in such a way as that the proof of the reality of the facts recorded involves the truth of the doctrine. Nearly every great doctrine has been either developed in or illustrated by some historic event, upon which we can as fully and as safely exercise the powers of our mind in eliciting and testing truth as we can upon the facts of science. And, it may be added, though the Bible has in every age since the completion of the Canon, been subjected to the scrutiny of historical criticism and been assailed with every weapon which ingenuity could invent or an exhaustive scholarship rake up, it has uniformly come forth, in the judgment of impartial men, triumphant.

## FOURTEENTH LETTER.

SIR : I ask your earnest attention to the character of Christ.

Jesus Christ is an historical fact. The mythical theory of His existence is utterly baseless. Human nature never literally creates—its pictures are new combinations of existing objects, but the portraiture of the character and life of Jesus given in the Gospels is such, that, if looked at simply as an ideal picture, it defies explanation as a happy combination, a marvellous union, of any known features or virtues, ever seen before on earth.

### OUT OF THE PLANE OF HUMAN NATURE.

Taking the *ensemble* of qualities which make up this character, together with the originality and wonderful peculiarities of the form in which it is presented, the entire phenomenon is manifestly out of the plane of human nature. Neither in Greek, nor Roman, nor Jewish human nature can we discover the elements which could have evolved so peculiar a creation. On the supposition that Jesus of Nazareth never actually existed, it is not within the range of rational belief that the *idea* of such a being was formed in that *country*, that *age*, and in the minds of *such men* as the Evangelists are held to have been, and as in point of mental endowment and culture and social rank they certainly

were. These men, to whom this painting must be ascribed, bound as they were by the prejudices of their nation, were, as far as we can judge, as utterly incapable of imagining or executing such a portrait as the merest dauber of emulating the divinest performances of a Raphael or a Michael Angelo. And the moral transformation implied in the supposition that these plebeian Jews invented what they have drawn involves no greater anomaly in human nature than to suppose them endowed with the extraordinary *intellectual* qualities which so unique and so wonderful a portrait demands, a portrait which it is inconceivable that even one should successfully execute, and yet which no less than four have dared to essay.

#### HIS CHARACTER NOT INVENTED.

"It is," says an excellent writer, "a just and pregnant remark of Neander that the image of Christ could never have sprung from the consciousness of sinful humanity, but must be regarded as the reflection of the actual life of such a Being." Literature; confessedly, shows no parallel to it. The Hebrew mind, uninventive, bigoted, full of prejudice and of pride, desiring intensely secular advancement, must have seen and felt this spiritual splendor before it could portray it. Indeed, any genius that has appeared among men must have been in like manner illumined before it could have written or suggested the gospels. Homer never sang, in his resounding epic verse, such a singular combination of properties and parts, such a marvellous and unparalleled person as this. Plato, the most copious of all Grecian thinkers, the highest in philosophical and moral intuition, the most affluent in culture,

never delineated and never imagined such a character. His ideal good man is weak and lifeless in comparison. The supposition that the rude and untrained Hebrew fishermen—not poets at all, nor philosophical artists; not by nature saintly men, nor gifted with extraordinary spiritual insight, but common in fibre, engaged from childhood in manual occupations and pervaded with the meanness of sentiment and of sympathy which belonged to the Jew—that they imagined this, each for himself, and knit their fancies into the compactness of this personal life, making its childhood so lovely and its manhood so majestic, and then told of it, each in his own plain way, without having seen it, leaving it to be the wonder of the world and the superlative marvel of history, while still all unreal, it is too incredible to ask refutation!” “It would,” as has well been said, “have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus.”

The history of Christ, then, is not a work of fiction. The antiquity of the records being granted—and it is granted at this day by all who have seriously investigated the subject, and who, on the ground of scholarship and of intellectual and moral competency, are entitled to consideration,—it must be admitted He is a real historical personage—as real as Cæsar or Alexander. We can make nothing of the history of nations, of opinions, of philosophy, of the world, of anything in the past, if this is denied. All history is connected with that life; all history, for eighteen hundred years at least, turns on that life. The fact that he lived and founded the Christian religion is recognized by Josephus, by Tacitus, by Pliny. It is not denied by Celsus, by Porphyry, by Julian, as it would have been if it could have been done. It is not denied by Mr. Gib-

bon, but is assumed in his labored argument everywhere. It is not denied by Strauss, it is not denied by Rénan. How, indeed, *could* it be? Beyond all question, the first and last impression which the Gospels irresistibly make upon every fair-minded reader is that of the artless simplicity and honesty of the writers. We may contest their learning, critical sagacity and worldly wisdom, but it is impossible to deny their good faith; it shines forth from every line; it is even strengthened by the many discrepancies in minor details, and it was sealed with their own blood. Goethe, as good a judge of literary productions as ever lived, deliberately said: "I consider the Gospels as thoroughly genuine, for there is reflected in them a majesty and sublimity which emanated from the person of Christ, and which are as truly divine as anything ever seen on earth."

#### FREE FROM OSTENTATION.

The character of Christ was *unostentatious*. We should naturally suppose that such a personage, setting up the most astounding claims and proposing the most extraordinary work, would surround himself with extraordinary circumstances. We should expect something uncommon and striking in his look, his dress, his mode of speech, his outward life, and the train of his attendants. But the very reverse is the case. His greatness is singularly unostentatious, modest and quiet; far from repelling the beholder, it attracts and invites him to familiar approach. Without possessions, without patronage, without any auxiliary of power or worldly greatness, He, nevertheless, shines with a lustre which many ages have not dimmed. From the frame

of this lowliness, that countenance of moral loveliness looks upon us with a mysterious and imperative fascination. It is manifest that the delineation owes not a single grace to the external charms. If we examine the progress of the unvarnished narrative we detect no semblance of display. The very suspicion of human glory is precluded from every beholder's mind. His public life never moved on the imposing arena of secular heroism, but within the humble circle of everyday life, and the simple relations of a son, a brother, a citizen, a teacher, and a friend. Except when some great misery calls for the breaking forth of hidden power, Christ pursues the noiseless tenor of his way in a manner so natural and unobtrusive that we almost forget the public offices which He is afterwards seen to assume. Retirement and even secrecy cause some of his most wonderful actions.

#### FREE FROM SUPERSTITION.

Jesus was free from *superstition*. He lived in an age of superstition. The most enlightened philosophers were unable to free themselves entirely from the dreadful incubus. The Jewish teachers were no exception. And, what was worse, they had in addition laid upon themselves the yoke of the oral law. They were in abject slavery to the tradition of the elders, which, with its ten thousand burdensome requirements, resulted in intolerable bondage to conscientious minds, while in those less earnest the result was formalism and hypocrisy. From all this Jesus was free, and taught others to be free also.



## NOT ASCETIC.

Though Christ is the most unworldly of beings, yet there is no *ascetic sourness* or *repugnance*, no misanthropic distaste in His manner, as if He were bracing Himself against the world to keep it off. The more closely He is drawn to other worlds the more fresh and susceptible is he to the humanities of this. The little child is an image of gladness, which His heart leaps forth to embrace. The wedding and the feast and the funeral have all their cord of sympathy in His bosom. Some truly pious persons are apt to look with contempt on certain classes. It is not easy to treat respectfully the fickle multitude with their follies and spites, the underhanded with their pretence of fairness, the great men who are small, the ignorant who are proud, the friend who becomes an enemy. But Christ, though He looked straight into souls, and, of course, saw a great deal of wickedness, never hated man. He hated sin, hated it as no man ever did, but this He could do without having any feeling of malice against the sinner. He honored all because of their relation to God and immortality. He had no feeling of caste. He could mingle with publicans and sinners in order to benefit them. The poor and illiterate children of God He welcomed as warmly as He did the rich and the educated disciples.

## WITHOUT PREJUDICE.

Jesus was free from *prejudice*. It is almost impossible for ordinary men to escape being tinged with the views and feelings of their countrymen,—it is, indeed, considered a virtue not to be ashamed of one's birth-place, and it is remarkable how much geography has to do with the opinions of men. It is impossible for

us to escape the influence of our little town. There was, however, no provincialism about Christ. The resident of the obscure village of Nazareth, who had never been more than seventy miles from home, was as thorough a cosmopolitan as the best traveled man of any age. Born a Jew, He is remarkably free from the national prejudices which ran in the very blood of those favorites of heaven. His character and the tone of His ethical system are uncongenial with the place in which He lived. As a consequence of this universal world-spirit, He is natural in all the relations which He assumes.

#### FREE FROM EXCITEMENT.

*Freedom from excitement* is another trait of the character of Christ. His life was marked by courage, power, majesty, but by nothing of the feverish and the eruptive. He did not dash off with impetuosity one hour, and sink into languor the next. He was earnest without being fierce, and calm without being dull. No one could think of Him as a mere religious enthusiast. He is always master of Himself, and master of the situation in which He may be placed. His miracles here furnish a striking illustration. Amid these wonderful works He always maintains self-restraint and perfect poise. We never see Him standing for a moment in surprise before them. They seem to be perfectly natural to Him. He does them apparently as easily and as naturally as we perform our every-day acts of interference with the general laws of nature. The disciples, upon their first exercise of the Master's power, came running back in excitement, rejoicing that the spirits were made subject unto them. Jesus does not

share their astonishment, but calms and hallows their thoughts by reminding them of a better reason for their joy. He never seems to have mistaken His power, to have attempted more than He could perform, or to have been astonished at His own success, when all men marvelled at Him. "Remarkable as was the character of Jesus," says Dr. Channing, "it was distinguished by nothing more than by calmness and self-possession. This trait pervades His other excellences. How calm was His piety! Point me, if you can, to one vehement, passionate expression of His religious feelings. Does the Lord's Prayer breathe a feverish enthusiasm? The habitual style of Jesus on the subject of religion, if introduced into many churches of His followers at the present day, would be charged with coldness. The calm and the rational character of His piety is particularly seen in the doctrine which He so earnestly inculcates, that disinterested love and self-denying service to our fellow-creatures are the most acceptable worship we can offer to our Creator. His benevolence, too, though singularly earnest and deep, was composed and serene. He never lost the possession of Himself in His sympathy with others; was never hurried into the impatient and rash enterprises of an enthusiastic philanthropy, but did good with the tranquillity and constancy which mark the providence of God."

#### UNCONCERNED ABOUT MYSTERIES.

Jesus was never *troubled in relation to mysteries*. "Men who have reached any maturity of intellect are troubled more or less with the mysterious things which belong to the divine system. There are seeming confusions that we cannot harmonize, and apparent con-

traditions that we cannot reconcile. The mind therefore wanders as one who has lost his way, and doubts by reason of the strange things which strike the soul. Wrong feelings arise in the heart; perplexity torments the understanding; unhappiness eats into the troubled spirit. Now, nothing of this experience is seen in Christ. He seems to have been able to look over the system of God, finding nothing in that system that threw Him into a state of doubt. Where to us there is intricacy, to Him there was plainness. We never find Him attempting to explain away the dark features of the creation, as some wise men have attempted to do, hoping by such means to find rest. His high attitude of life, standing on the mountain summit of being, while we are away down in the valleys below, enabled Him to take in a multitude of particulars, which, if we could behold them, would quiet us, even as they quieted Him."

## CONSISTENT.

Another characteristic of Christ is His *freedom from inconsistency*. There is no man, however wise and good, who is not more or less inconsistent, who does not occasionally fall out of his role, yield to the pressure of circumstances, allow himself to be carried away by passion or excitement, betray his native weakness, falter in the path of virtue. But Jesus is the same in doctrine and conduct from the beginning to the close, before friend and foe, in private and public life, in action and suffering. He had never to retract a word, never to regret a deed, never to ask the pardon of God or man. "In the working of His *intellect*, He is never at fault. There is no false statement, no false reasoning. He does not find it necessary to change His

opinions by reason of new light. In the working of his *feelings*, there is no wrong movement. The right emotion always appears in the right circumstances. The feelings are neither too fast nor too slow. Their measure and variety are just as they should be. In the working of His *will*, there is no hindering power. It always has a ready and fixed determination for righteousness. The entire will, and not a part of it, is set for that which is good." The entire history of Christ shows not the slightest disposition on His part to be an extremist. He is, as has well been remarked, never a radical, never a conservative. He will not allow His disciples to deny Him before kings and governments; He will not let them renounce their allegiance to Cæsar. He exposes the oppressions of the Pharisees in Moses' seat, but, encouraging no factious resistance, says, "Do as they command you." His position as a reformer was universal; according to his principles almost nothing, whether in church or state, or in social life, was right, and yet He is thrown into no antagonism against the world. With a reform to be carried in almost everything, He is yet as quiet and cordial, and as little in the attitude of bitterness or impatience, as if all hearts were with Him, or the work already done, so perfect is the balance of His feeling, so intuitively moderated is it by a wisdom not human.

Let us glance now, Sir, at the *positive* elements of the character of Jesus.

#### BENEFICENT.

"He went about doing good." He wiped away many a tear; He made many human hearts glad, and

many others connected with them felt the benignant and genial influence of His earthly ministry. He relieved and removed a great amount of physical suffering; He created and planted in the world a great amount of physical happiness. He devoted Himself to the work of blessing man, and in both regions of His life, in His acts and in His words, in the healing, spiritual truths which He imparted, and in the unnumbered material kindnesses which He bestowed, we discover one reigning motive—love of man, deep, enduring, redeeming love. It was seen from the first that His awful powers were uniformly beneficent; that He came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that He used Omnipotence to bless, but never to hurt. Men saw Him clothed with power over disease, and even over death, able to cast forth spirits, or to still the sea, and yet accessible, full of sympathy; the lofty Patriot, the tender Friend, the patient Counsellor, shedding tears, at times, from a full heart, and ever ready with a wise and gentle word for all, so unaffected and gentle that children drew round Him with a natural instinct, and even worldly hardness and vice were softened before Him; and this contrast of transcendent power, and perfect humility, made them feel that He was indeed the head of the kingdom of God among men. The entire history of His life is the history of active and diffusive benignity.

#### SELF-DENYING.

*Self-denial* marked the career of Christ. Too legibly are the characters written on the fallen heart and on a fallen world,—“All seek their own.” Selfishness is the great law of our degenerate nature. When the



love of God was dethroned from the soul, self vaulted into the vacant seat, and there, in some one of its Protean shapes, continues to reign. Jesus stands out a grand, solitary exception in the midst of a world of selfishness. His entire life was one abnegation of self, a beautiful, living embodiment of that charity which "seeketh not her own." There is not an instance in which He appears to have proposed His own private, separate good as the end either of His actions or suffering. Never were His miracles mere ostentations of power, but always expressions of goodness. Love actuated His itinerary, on foot, over the rough hills and torrid plains of Palestine, and flowed out to the poor and the dying in streams of relief. And it was love that was personified and held up to the view of angels and of God on the "place of skulls" and the cursed cross.

#### PATIENT.

*Patience* forms another element. Even good men, oftentimes, not seeing the immediate fruit of their labors and schemes, grow weary in well-doing. Jesus had the divine power to wait for results. He had the patience of true enthusiasm. He had placed before his mind the attainment of a kingdom as extensive as the human race, but He does not delude Himself or those around Him with imagined pictures of speedy results. He says that the perfection of His work will be like the growth of the mustard seed, or the working of leaven. When he sees men rejecting the truth and himself hastening to an ignominious death, he does not feel that his life has been a failure, but with divine constancy says: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." There is no impatience or despon-

dency in him. He does not rail at the hardness of the human heart and the ingratitude of his fellow-men, nor does his heart sink when he contemplates the gigantic social evils which afflict the race, but swells with hope that a better day will come.

#### CHARACTER SYMMETRICAL.

Another remarkable element in the character of Jesus was *symmetry*. We find in it the union of all graces that are severed in others. We see in Him the tenderness of woman, with the strength of manhood, the love of friends, the love of His Jewish race, yet the largest kinship with every form of humanity, every lot of suffering, the heart seemingly born for the still happiness of home, yet the self-surrender of the martyr. His was a super-human completeness or roundness of mind. His supreme loyalty to the Father in Heaven did not exclude His loyalty to the magistrate on earth. How beautifully he combined a contemplative with an active life! He was the busiest of men, and yet the most devotional. His career was marked by ceaseless exertion and needful spiritual cessation and repose; the outer life all given to God and man; the private, inner life, sedulously cared for and nurtured. Not only have we the imperial intellect in Him, but also its full peer in the imperial heart. No other man has ever existed who was perfectly equal, an evenly balanced unit in his powers of thought and emotion, much less the highest possible type of both. Our master human minds generally exhaust themselves completely in the utterance of great thoughts, because the thinking faculty absorbs their whole being. But, while their whole being becomes swallowed up in

thought, their heart is correspondingly impoverished. To this Jesus is the one mighty exception. Both these declarations are true, namely, that no man ever reached His power of thinking, and yet, no man ever reached His power of loving. Love and light never had such a blending as in Him. After a life of ineffable luminousness he died, actually imploring forgiveness on His murderers. The very thought is stupendous, while the feeling is unfathomable. When He speaks He casts His eye into the infinite heights of revelation, and we soar into its sublimities after Him, but when He smiles He presses us to His bosom, and His tender affection makes our hearts glow while we are folded in His arms.

#### FIDELITY.

The character of Jesus was marked by unswerving *fidelity*. With *terrible severity*, although seldom, He exposed and denounced evil. Friendless and powerless as He seemed to be—as in His earthly relations He certainly was—He did not repress on necessary occasions a burning indignation, and, if a voice of thunder was required to awaken and alarm that generation, such a voice was lifted up and resounded through the length and breadth of the land. And yet this severity was always free from everything like human passion, and only lurked in His heart of love as the lightning lurks amid the warm, soft drops of the summer shower. *Tenderness* ruled His spirit, even toward His enemies. Into this His startling sternness at last dissolved. As He approaches the city, in which He is soon to be crucified, and against which the fire of righteous indignation could not but go forth, pity, infinite pity, pours her quenching tears upon that fire,

and with another look and in altered tone, in which the compassion of the Godhead reveals itself, he exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!" And at the last this city was distinguished by a singular act of His grace, and when He commanded His disciples to "preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations," He added, "*beginning at Jerusalem.*"

## WITHOUT SIN.

*Sinlessness* marked the character of Jesus. The marks of passion, of weakness, of pride, of the love of popularity, of a thousand infirmities, some of which we notice in all other men, are not to be found in the life and conversation which is mirrored in the four Gospels. For Christ no friend ever apologized, and no enemy convinced Him of sin. "To find imaginary flaws," says an able writer, "is not to read the Gospels with an honest mind. If we study this life as it is on the simple page it remains the sinless miracle of all time. Place by the side of Jesus Christ all the purest men who have won the homage of the race, a Confucius, a Socrates, yet each has some blemish which mars his virtue, and his highest grace has been a growth through struggle. Gather all of Christian name, even those who came nearest their Lord in the first age, yet we know that human effort with God's grace could make a John, a Paul, but not a Christ, and when we read the biography of the saintliest since; a Kempis, a Fenelon, a Herbert, a Leighton, all are but single, broken rays, of this white light, all confess themselves sinful men, whose goodness has been borrowed from their perfect Master."

Here it is proper to remark that Jesus was, during His earthly career, most loved and adored by those who knew him best. "Human characters are always reduced in their eminence, and the impressions of awe they have raised, by a closer and more complete acquaintance. But it was not so with Christ. With His disciples, in closest terms of intercourse for three whole years, their brother, friend, teacher, monitor, guest, fellow-traveller, seen by them under all the conditions of public ministry and private society, he is yet visibly raising their sense of his degree and quality, becoming a greater wonder and holier mystery, and gathering to his person feelings of reverence and awe, at once more general and more sacred. And it will be discovered in all the disciples that Christ is more separated from them, and holds them in deeper awe, the closer He comes to them and the more perfectly they know Him. He grows sacred, peculiar, wonderful, divine as acquaintance reveals Him. At first He is only a man, as the senses report him to be; knowledge, observation, familiarity raise Him into the God-man. And exactly this appears in the history without any token of art, or even apparent consciousness that it does appear—appears because it is true."

#### PERFECT.

The character of Christ was *perfect*. "Other historical personages we can study to excess,—we become weary of them, and they are belittled to our apprehension. We can take in all that they were and all that they accomplished,—we can go round them and over them, and the greatest of them constitutes so small a portion of the world's greatness, and shapes so small a

portion of the world's history, that he becomes dwarfed in the very attempt to compass and comprehend his magnitude. The fame of some popular hero is often thus injuriously affected by our having read and heard too much about him, though it be all to his praise. But who gets tired of Christ, or feels that he has exhausted His fulness? He occupies the lowest place with those who know Him least. He grows upon our study. New lines and hues of spiritual beauty reveal themselves with every fresh perusal of the evangelic record; there is new meaning in His acts, new force in His words. On intimate conversance with His life indifference passes into respect, respect deepens into reverence, reverence glows into adoration. More and more does the human become divine, as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. None look so lovingly into His countenance as those whose wonted place is with John on the bosom of their Lord. We can conceive of no change in the picture which would not be for the worse. There is no defect, no excess, no redundancy."

And it must be remembered that that character has been regarded as equally perfect in all those eighteen centuries which have elapsed since Christ's appearing; among all nations where He has been made known by all ranks and conditions of society. Abstractly there are great varieties of opinion among men about what is perfect in character; there are different standards of morality, there are different views in philosophy, there are different customs and opinions, there are different things aimed at in life, there are different attempts to draw a perfect character. That which would seem to be perfect in one age, and, according to the



mode of judging in that age, might be seen to be very far from being perfect when men should have more enlarged and correct views of what constitutes perfection, and that which would come up to the demands of that more advanced age might still show defects in an age still more advanced, and might fail to meet the general judgment of mankind as to a claim of absolute sinlessness. But this is the peculiarity of the character of Jesus, that it commends itself equally to every age, to every class of persons, to the learned and the unlearned, to sages, to philosophers, and to those in humble life—to all as absolutely free from sin.

#### IMPORTANT TESTIMONY.

No change, indeed, has there been, as time has advanced, in the estimate formed of the character of Christ by earnest, thinking men,—even by many who have not accepted Him as God's Messiah.

#### ROUSSEAU.

“Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction,” says Rousseau; “how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose name it records should be himself a mere man? What sweetness, what purity in his manner! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.”

## NAPOLEON.

Readers may recall the touching words in which Napoleon in St. Helena referred to Jesus Christ. There, with the solemn ocean round him and the silent sky above, the fierce passions which had so long raged in his heart growing still as the volcanic fires which once tore the heart of his lonely isle, he felt how the infinitude of calm in the mind of Jesus overarched all the working and all the waning of men. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon had founded empires, and they had passed away, but the influence of Jesus Christ, gentle as of sunlight over volcanic flame, was still sovereign in the souls of millions. Napoleon in St. Helena thought that an irrefragable proof that Christ was Divine.

## GOETHE.

Goethe, the universal genius of modern Germany, and who is believed by many to have been the greatest man who has appeared in Europe for several centuries, calls Christ "the Divine Man," "the Holy One," and represents Him as the pattern, example and model of humanity. Mr. Carlyle, Goethe's great follower in England, always referred in terms of profound reverence to Christ. The life of the Saviour was in his view a "perfect ideal Poem." "The greatest of all heroes," he said, "is One whom we do not name here! Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter."

## BYRON.

"If ever man was God or God man," said Lord Byron, "Jesus Christ was both." "Whatever else," said John Stuart Mill, "may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left an unique

figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his teaching. . . . Nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."

SHELLEY.

Poor Shelley, if he had the heart to blaspheme, had also the sagacity to write these words:—"The being who has influenced in the most memorable manner the opinions and the fortunes of the human species is Jesus Christ. At this day his name is connected with the devotional feelings of two hundred millions of the human race. The institutions of the most civilized portions of the globe derive their authority from the sanction of his doctrines."

RÉNAN.

"Whatever may be the surprises of the future," says Rénan, "Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing, his legend will call forth tears without end, his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts, all ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, there is none born greater than Jesus."

PHILLIPS.

"When," says Mr. Wendell Phillips, "we think of these moral characteristics and see what the religion has done for the world, we see the commentary which eighteen centuries of civilization have written upon the Gospels, see what Europe and America are to-day, and then turn back to Judea, to that haughty, bigoted,

exclusive, illiterate, despised race and see where the religion was cradled, we cannot but think that it was providential in its birth and beneficence . . . . . It is easier to believe that a power greater than man took possession of that Jewish peasant and made Him the organ of its communication and the instrument of its working, than that He, by any wit or culture or cunning of His unaided faculties, created this original religion and constructed modern civilization."

Such are some of the emphatic and eloquent testimonies which have been given to the benignant and celestial virtues of Jesus.

#### CHRIST'S OPINION OF HIMSELF.

The question now presents itself: What did Christ think of Himself, and whom did He claim to be in consequence? To this question there can be but one answer. Nothing is plainer from the four Gospels, than that Jesus again and again claimed to be God, in the true and proper sense of the word. He asked His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "This is revealed to thee by my Father who is in heaven." Again to Philip He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also." When His foes, as well as His friends, demanded, "Tell us plainly if thou be the Christ," Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." Then they began to stone Him as a blasphemer, and He asked, "For which of these good works do ye stone me?" They answered, "We stone thee not for a good work but for blasphemy, *because that thou being a man makest thyself God.*" All this shows that both His friends and foes understood

Him to claim that He was God, and His foes laid such a sense upon His words as to expose Him to the Jewish death penalty of stoning for their bold use. So, too, when Jesus was on trial before the high priest, who as the highest religious authority had a right to know exactly what His pretensions were, and who put the most solemn oath to Him then known in Jewish jurisprudence, thus, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God;" with the calmest self-possession he responded, "I am." Immediately Caiaphas exclaimed, "What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" Under that appeal they declared Him guilty, and decided that He ought to die under their law, because He claimed the prerogatives of God. They understood perfectly, that in speaking of Himself as He did, He claimed a oneness in knowledge, power and glory with the Father, an intrinsic affinity with Him in essence.

Now the question of questions comes, "Who was Jesus of Nazareth?"

#### NO IMPOSTURE.

To allege that Christ was an *impostor* is the boldest and basest of all absurdities. It is universally acknowledged, and, as we have seen, even by infidels themselves, that He preached the purest code of morals and lived the purest life, crowned with the noblest death. How, then, could one and the same character be at once the very best and the very worst? The contradiction is as monstrous as that white is black and black is white. How could He play the hypocrite in view of poverty, persecution and crucifixion, as

His certain and only reward in this life? How could He keep up the play without even for a moment falling out of His role and showing His true colors? How could such a wicked scheme find universal acceptance and produce greater and better results than any which human wisdom and goodness before or since has been able to achieve, or even to conceive? These questions are unanswerable. The hypothesis of imposture is logically so untenable and morally so revolting, that its mere statement is its condemnation. No scholar has seriously endeavored to carry it out.

#### NO ENTHUSIAST.

Equally baseless is the theory that Jesus was an *enthusiast* who deceived Himself—a noble dreamer, imagining that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah, and dying a victim to this delusion. We have already seen that Christ possessed the most clear, balanced, serene, and comprehensive intellect known to history. Is it, then, within the range of rational belief, that His mind was so strangely clouded, so hotly imaginative, that He believed Himself, not to have seen a vision, or heard a voice, not to have healed one or two sick persons or calmed one or two maniacs, but to have cured blindness, deafness, lameness, leprosy, for years, by word or touch,—to have walked on the sea,—to have fed large multitudes with a few loaves and fishes,—to have dried up a tree with His rebuke,—to have, on several occasions, recalled the dead to life?

“In Judea, where the minds of men were burning with feverish expectation of a Messiah, I can,” says Dr. Channing, “easily conceive of a Jew imagining



that in himself this ardent conception, this ideal of glory, was to be realized. I can conceive of his seating himself in fancy on the throne of David, and secretly pondering the means of his appointed triumphs. But that a Jew should fancy himself the Messiah, and at the same time should strip that character of all the attributes which had fired his youthful imagination and heart—that he should start aside from all the feelings and hopes of his age, and should acquire a consciousness of being destined to a wholly new career, and one as unbounded as it was new, this is exceedingly improbable; and one thing is certain, that an imagination so erratic, so ungoverned, and able to generate the conviction of being destined to a work so immeasurably disproportioned to the power of the individual, must have partaken of insanity. Now, is it conceivable that an individual, mastered by so wild and fervid an imagination, should have sustained the dignity claimed by Christ, should have acted worthily the highest part ever assumed on earth? Would not his enthusiasm have broken out amidst the peculiar excitements of the life of Jesus, and have left a touch of madness on his teaching and conduct? Is it to such a man that we should look for the inculcation of a new and perfect form of virtue, and for the exemplification of humanity in its fairest form?"

#### DISCIPLES NOT ENTHUSIASTS.

It is important to add, that the evidence that the disciples of Jesus, in preparing His history, were not overmastered by enthusiasm, and driven to extravagance of representation, is as conclusive as that which shows that He was free from this spirit Himself.

What they have written exhibits a simplicity without example in other annals. It is fragmentary, and devoid of that rotundity and glow which belong to the works of heat and fusion. The manner of the biography is as surprising as its contents. The most odious assaults on the chief personage are related with coolness. The most astonishing acts of power and marvels of endurance, humility and meekness are related without a syllable of praise. There is not a word of panegyric, and scarcely a word of comment. The vastness and awfulness of the matter stand in contrast with the strongest equanimity and reserve in the expression. Whatever else this may prove, it demonstrates that the writers were neither enthusiasts nor fanatics. Had they been such, it would have somewhere distorted and exaggerated the teaching, somewhere cast a sinister expression or lurid glare on the divine countenance, or somewhere blazed forth in language of intemperance and fury. If the terms can be used without misapprehension, we would say of the gospel history, that it is unrivalled in common sense, well-balanced narrative, and sound judgment. As the character represented rises high above all mists of vagary, so the representation itself repels the thought of enthusiastic excess.

#### NOT A MERE MAN.

In the light which the New Testament casts upon the character of Jesus, it cannot, Sir, be successfully maintained that He was a *mere man*. The truth beams out from every page of His life that He could not have been a man and nothing more. "If there was no superhuman element in His person, why have we but one Jesus? Why did human nature succeed in pro-

ducing such a prodigy in such unfavorable circumstances as at Nazareth and Capernaum? Since, upon the supposition that Jesus was a mere man, the same powers are always present, why did she succeed but once? why never before, and why never since? Human nature has had the opportunity a thousand times, and in circumstances a thousand times more favorable, of producing a Perfect Man: how comes it, then, that this youth of Nazareth, born in poverty and reared amid Jewish prejudice, should be the only one? Here is a problem which rationalism cannot solve. If Jesus is a mere outgrowth of human nature, as Rénan and others would have us believe, His character is a greater miracle than all the miracles connected with His birth and life. Why should this youth of Nazareth alone be the most innocent, pure, original, consistent, patient, spiritual of men? The perfect character of Jesus and the circumstances in which it was developed necessitate the presence of a superhuman element. He was a man and something more."

#### MORE THAN MAN.

What that "something more" was, we can be at no loss to determine in the light of the testimony of Christ, already adduced, respecting His own Divinity. He "thought it no robbery to be equal with God." And, most important is it to observe how frequently and pointedly, for the establishment of this very truth, He referred to the Old Testament, against which the assaults of infidels are mainly directed. "I was daily with you," said He to those who came to apprehend Him, "in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the *Scriptures* must be fulfilled." "Think not that

I am come to destroy *the Law* or *the Prophets*: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the Law of Moses*, and in *the Prophets*, and in *the Psalms* concerning me." Thus Jesus clasping in one whole all the Old Testament Scriptures under their recognized title, subjects to their exact fulfilment in His person His claim to the Messiahship. He turns His adversaries, the Jews, to their sacred oracles for a confutation of their unbelief, saying, "Search the Scriptures . . . they are they which testify of me." He also refers His rejection by them to their disbelief of Moses' writings, saying, "For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Unquestioned, therefore, must forever remain the truth of the Old Testament while its prophecies of the coming Christ are chosen by Jesus of Nazareth to record His history from the birth at Bethlehem to the ascension on Olivet. He so enwrapped Himself in the written Word, that the two grand divisions of it—the Old Testament and the New Testament—must stand or fall together. It is impossible to weaken the claim of the Hebrew Scriptures to our reverence without impeaching the testimony of the Son of God. The Incarnate Word determines that nothing shall rise above the authority of the written word. His revelations of "the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God," are all made in the light which shines from Inspiration. The unfolding of His own person and work is but the interpretation of earlier symbols. In no instance is the truth of the past cen-

turies allowed to be set aside as unworthy the study of the present. His stern rebuke fell on them who "made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition." While the glories of the new dispensation were represented as the sequel of an earlier covenant when Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading from Isaiah's roll, said: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

## FIFTEENTH LETTER.

SIR: The tree is known by its fruit; so is the character of a book to be estimated by the influence which it exerts. To this test of value no other volume can appeal with anything like the triumph which the Bible claims in such a trial. Its career has been one of light, liberty, and glory. How marked and marvellous have been its effects!

### INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER.

Look at its influence upon *individual character*. Contrast in point of mere benevolence the lives and deportment of such an infidel as Rousseau and such a Christian as Doddridge—the one all pride, selfishness, fury, caprice, rage, gross sensuality, casting about firebrands and death, professing no rule of morals but his feelings, abusing the finest powers to the dissemination not merely of objections against Christianity but of the most licentious and profligate principles; Doddridge all purity, mildness, meekness and love, ardent in his good will to man, the friend and counsellor of the sorrowful, regular, calm, consistent, dispensing peace and truth by his labors and his writings, living not for himself but for the common good, to which he sacrificed his health and even life.

Or contrast such a man as Volney with Swartze. They both visit distant lands; they are active and indefatigable in their pursuits; they acquire celebrity



and communicate respectively a certain impulse to their widened circles. But the one, jaundiced by infidelity, the sport of passion and caprice; lost to all argument and right feeling, comes home to diffuse the poison of unbelief, to be a misery to himself, the plague and disturber of his country, the dark calumniator of the Christian faith; the other remains far from his native land to preach the peaceful doctrine on the shores of India; he becomes the friend and brother of those whom he had never seen, and only heard of as fellow-creatures; he diffuses blessings for half a century; he secures the admiration of the heathen prince near whom he resides; he becomes the mediator between contending tribes and nations; he establishes a reputation for purity, integrity, disinterestedness, meekness, which compels all around to respect and love him; he forms churches; he instructs children; he dispenses the seeds of charity and truth; he is the model of all the virtues he enjoins.

#### INDIVIDUAL HAPPINESS.

Look, also, at the effect of Christianity upon *individual happiness*. Hear the urbane, the powerful, the envied, but infidel Chesterfield speak:

“I have run,” he tells us, “the silly rounds of pleasure and of business, and I have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appreciate them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their fair outside and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all

the coarse pullies and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminated the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; and I look on what has passed as one of those wild dreams which opium occasions, and I by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive illusion. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No. I cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that he has become mine enemy."

Hear also the confession of Byron, alike eminent in the splendor of his genius and in his hardened wickedness:

"Though gay companions o'er the bowl  
 Dispel a while the sense of ill,  
 Though pleasure fill the maddening soul,  
 The heart—the heart is lonely still.

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,  
 Count o'er thy days from anguish free,  
 And know whatever thou hast been  
 'Tis something better not to be.

"Nay, for myself, so dark my fate  
 Through every turn of life hath been,  
 Men and the world so much I hate,  
 I care not when I quit the scene."

Now, let such an experience as this be contrasted

with that of thousands of thousands who have lived in communion with God, enjoying the light of His countenance, resigned to His will, happy in the discharge of duty, and rejoicing in the prospect of the ever-blooming inheritance awaiting them when death shall remove them from earth, and who shall, in view of this contrast, deny that the religion of the Bible is the source, and the only source of real and enduring happiness?

#### SOCIAL RELATIONS.

The Bible also exerts a blessed influence on the *social relations*. Wherever it is faithfully preached and freely inculcated, and its doctrines are carried home to the understandings of men, the aspect of society is altered, the frequency of crime is diminished, men begin to love justice and to administer it by laws; and a virtuous public opinion, that strongest safeguard of right, spreads over a nation the shield of its invisible protection. Wherever it has faithfully been brought to bear upon the human heart, even under most unpromising circumstances, it has, within a single generation, revolutionized the whole structure of society, and thus within a few years done more for man than all other means have for ages accomplished without it. In proof of the power of the Bible to leaven and renovate society we need only point to the Sandwich Islands, and to the mission fields and schools of India and Turkey; we need but allude to the marked difference between nations which have received the Bible and those which have rejected it—between Prussia and France, between England or America and Spain. On a candid survey of the field we see the correctness of Chancellor Kent's saying: "The general diffusion of

the Bible is the most effectual way to civilize and humanize mankind ; to purify and exalt the general system of public morals ; to give efficacy to the just precepts of international and municipal law ; to enforce the observance of prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude, and to improve all the relations of social and domestic life."

#### MODE OF INFLUENCE.

Nor let us fail to notice *the manner* in which this sacred Book provides for the regulation of human conduct in social life ; for this, putting all other arguments out of sight, makes a strong appeal to our faith in favor of its divinity. If any person had been required to say how many volumes would have been necessary to point out the various duties which man owes to man—how extensive the code which should have recognized every relation and met every case—the natural answer would have been : "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." But, with majestic simplicity, with the efficiency of an all-comprehending wisdom, it is here done in a few pages. The duties are ascertained with an adaptation to all countries, times and circumstances, and they are all stated with the highest and most commanding sanctions. Rulers here learn lessons of just and gracious government ; subjects, of respect and obedience. The foundations of all wise jurisprudence are found here ; nor is there a general principle of enlightened legislation which does not flow from this source. Commands of moderation and equity to masters, and of conscientious honesty and submission to servants, have here their place. Parental tenderness is here divinely blended with parental authority, and

in the conjugal relation, made so sacred, so hallowed in the religion of Christ, all the strength of moral obligation and the elevating sentiments of piety are added to the tender affections of our nature, strengthening and making them permanent. And where a particular precept may be wanting, still in no case need we err, as even here we have the guiding light of some great principle.

#### POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

The *political* influence of the Bible is well known. What has the volume not done for the establishment of genuine liberty? "Christianity," says Montesquieu, "is a stranger to despotic power." "Religion," says De Tocqueville, "is the companion of liberty in all its conflicts, the cradle of its infancy and the Divine Source of its claims." Even the Abbe de la Mennais, who had one of the most powerful minds in Europe, little as he regarded Christianity as a revelation from God, was accustomed to speak of its Author as the *Great Republican* of his age. "Christianity," said De Witt Clinton, "is in its essence, its doctrines and its forms republican. It teaches our descent from a common pair, it inculcates the natural equality of mankind, and it points to our origin and our end, to our nativity and our graves, and to our immortal destinies, as illustrations of this impressive truth." Even the historian Hume, whose prepossessions all lay on the side of absolute monarchy, and who was sufficiently prejudiced against the Bible, was constrained to the confession, "that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the *Puritans alone*, and that it was to this sect the English owe the whole freedom of their Constitution." The world's annals

attest the truth of these utterances, and they have one of their noblest verifications in the fact that the tree of liberty in our own happy country, beneath whose ample shade we have lived, and by whose fairest fruit we have been fed, was sown by God Himself in His revelation, and owes its elevation and grandeur entirely to the truth which He has made known.

#### CAUSE OF HUMANITY.

Nor must the influence of the Bible on *the cause of humanity* be overlooked. The Gospel of Christ, indorsed and enforced by His example, introduced a new order of humanity into the world. It poured its fresh, renewing streams through all the channels of social life. In ancient Rome there was not a single charitable building; but after the introduction of Christianity there were twenty-five large houses set apart for the reception of orphans, of the sick, of strangers, of the aged, and of the poor. So it has been ever since. The heathen world has no almshouses, no asylums for age, infancy or misfortune. The ruins of palaces, temples, theatres and aqueducts meet the wondering eye of the traveller, but there is not a ruin of which it can be said: "This was a house of mercy." In Christian countries, however, a directly opposite spirit prevails. Here we witness the most astonishing sacrifices and labors for the benefit of the human race. Here we find a provident compassion at work for the relief of every misery of our nature. Nor is it regarded enough by the refined and zealous benevolence which in such lands prevails, to confuse the varieties of misfortune by extending the same indiscriminate aid to sufferers who agree in nothing but the common



characteristics of grief. Each individual calamity experiences a distinct compassion, is cherished with its appropriate comforts, and healed by its specific remedies. The maniac is shut out from the tumults of the world, the Magdalene weeps over the Gospel of Christ, and washes His name with her tears; a mother is given to the foundling, a Samaritan to the wounded, the drowned person is called back from the dead, the forsaken youth is snatched from the dominion of vice, a soul is breathed into the deaf and dumb, and the child-bearing woman, when she thinks of the days of her anguish, knows that she has where to lay her head. In every direction in which the eye can turn some edifice rises up consecrated to mercy, a vast hospital, a place of wounds and anguish, a tabernacle of healing and comfort.

Such, Sir, are some of the temporal effects of Christianity. It has marked its radiant course with acts of mercy and loving-kindness. The two thousand years during which it has been called by that name have been years of progress from the impure to the pure, from the barbarous to the humane, from the worse to the better. It has produced and diffused a civilization that has utterly eclipsed all pagan civilization. It has given woman her place. It has hedged round human life with new sanctions; abolishing polygamy and putting a stop to infanticide, to torture, to gladiatorial shows. It has mitigated the horrors of war, and cast into shadow the glory of it as compared with the glory of peace. It has abolished caste. It has condemned slavery.

#### CONFESSION OF INFIDELS.

And, let it be noted, infidels themselves have confessed this beneficent tendency of the Gospel. Boling-

broke acknowledges "that Constantine acted the part of a sound politician in protecting Christianity, as it tended to give firmness and solidity to his empire, softened the ferocity of the army, and reformed the licentiousness of the provinces, and by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, tended to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed. "No religion," says the same opposer of Christianity, "ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind. It makes right reason a law in every possible definition of the word. And therefore, even supposing it to have been purely a human invention, it had been the most amiable and the most useful invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good." Thus even Rousseau: "If all were perfect Christians, individuals would do their duty, the people would be obedient to the laws, the magistrates incorrupt, and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state." "I know the Scriptures sufficiently well to acknowledge," said Byron, "that if the mild and benignant spirit of this religion were believed and acted on by all, there would be a wonderful change in this wicked world."

When, therefore, infidelity calls upon us to cast the Bible away as delusion and vanity, we not only charge her with glaring inconsistency but demand that she first show us what she has to give us in its room. Let her spread before us a truthful record of what *she* has done to elevate, adorn and bless humanity; of the woes she has healed; of the sorrowful she has comforted; of the oppressed she has delivered from their

thralldom ; of the suffering she has relieved, and then it will be time enough for her to strive for the destruction of the precious Word of God.

#### A WISE DECISION.

Some years ago a society of gentlemen in England, most of whom had enjoyed a liberal education, and were persons of polished manners, but had unhappily imbibed infidel principles, used to assemble at each other's houses for the purpose of ridiculing the Scriptures, and hardening one another in their unbelief. At last they unanimously formed a resolution solemnly to burn the Bible, and so to be troubled no more with a Book which was so hostile to their principles and disquieting to their consciences. The day fixed upon arrived. A large fire was prepared, a Bible was laid on the table, and a flowing bowl ready to drink its dirge. For the execution of their plans they fixed upon a young gentleman of high birth, brilliant vivacity and elegance of manners. He undertook the task, and after a few enlivening glasses, amidst the applause of his jovial companions, he approached the table, took up the Bible, and was walking leisurely forward to push it into the fire ; but, happening to give it a look, all at once he was seized with a trembling, paleness overspread his countenance, and he seemed convulsed. He returned to the table, and, laying down the Bible, said, with a strong asseveration : "*We will not burn that Book till we get a better.*" Soon after this the same gay, lively young gentleman died, and on his death-bed was led to true repentance, deriving unshaken hopes of forgiveness and of future blessedness from that Book he was once going to burn.

## SIXTEENTH LETTER.

SIR: In this letter I desire to show that the difficulties in regard to the Bible are by no means confined to those who believe it to have come from God. In other words, I undertake to prove that if the Christian be esteemed credulous and superstitious in receiving as divine what the light of nature, the revelations of science and human experience have more and more confirmed, the infidel defies reason by a creed of contradictions to its teachings, and disgraces faith by a subscription to paradoxes more preposterous than prophecy and more marvellous than miracles. In doing this I shall strengthen my own views with such aid from distinguished men who have written on this subject as will make the demonstration all the more effective.

### MUST BELIEVE THE OLD TESTAMENT TO BE A FORGERY.

The infidel, if he regards the Old Testament as a *forgery*, must believe that some single scribe or some number of scribes in the days of Hezekiah, without any conceivable motive, prepared pens and parchment rolls to impose upon a nation a history unknown to the national life, a religion and a worship unconnected with any previous sentiment, either of reverence or superstition. Think of what such an undertaking would include—not only a forged history of a past of which those to whom it was addressed had no knowl-

edge, but along with it a forged poetry, a forged national literature, forged ethics, a forged religion, forged prayers and hymns, a forged ritual system, all made to suit; forged national songs for forged deliverances, a forged geography, at least in its names as adapted to ancient local events, a forged chronology, together with the forgery of many thousand proper names of men all having a significance in the vernacular language, and that significance corresponding so wonderfully to the times and circumstances in which they are supposed to be given. Even the language itself must to some extent be forged; it must be cut over like an old garment and made to fit the earlier as well as the later body. Old words must be forged and obsolete grammatical forms and obscure passages made on purpose, such as to demand the scholiast's aid. How does reason revolt from such a theory as this?

MUST BELIEVE THAT THE UNCULTIVATED JEWS  
WERE WISER THAN PHILOSOPHERS.

The infidel must believe that from a comparatively rude and uncultivated people, a horde of untutored shepherds but just escaped from a cruel and oppressive bondage, without philosophy, science or literature, we have obtained the only clear and consistent account of the origin of the world, the most sublime and rational and only worthy views of the Divine Being and attributes and the purest principles of law for regulating His worship and the duties and relations of mankind. He must believe that men were found among the Jews capable of instructing the world in these great truths, while the enlightened nations of antiquity—though justly celebrated for affording models of eloquence,

poetry, statuary and architecture, as well as sound principles of natural and moral science—have, in their highest stages of advancement, provided mankind with the most silly legends, puerile traditions and absurd theories on the world's origin and the first principles of religion.

MUST BELIEVE THAT PROPHECIES WERE GUESSES.

He must believe that predictions, with which history, written by neither Jews nor Christians, affords numerous striking coincidences, were mere guesses of men as devoid of political sagacity as, on his theory, of moral principle. For example, the prediction concerning the Jews—that they should be dispersed among all nations, be a proverb and a by-word, and be exposed to sufferings and persecutions—a prediction the fulfilment of which is before our eyes, in this people being without temple or altar, king, priest or prophet, in their continuing unchanged, though having endured all change, and in their remaining to our day distinct in the practice of the religious rites received by their fathers, and firm in their resistance of every effort to denationalize them—this, and all such predictions the infidel must believe to have been the utterances of ignorance or conjecture.

MUST ACCOUNT FOR THE ADHERENCE OF THE  
JEWS TO THEIR SCRIPTURES.

He must believe that, notwithstanding the Old Testament records bear witness to little but the shame of the Jews—are filled with reproaches and denunciations, tax them with the most tremendous guilt and menace them with terrible punishment, upbraid them



with the most egregious folly and the most odious ingratitude, remind them that their fathers had a glorious heritage and had forfeited it, a noble lineage and disgraced it, a Divine king, against whom they had been perpetually plotting treason—yet this people, instead of hunting down these documents for destruction, as being little better than “archives of libel” on their nation, act a natural and reasonable part in *having* persisted, and *still* persisting, in guarding and transmitting them with the profoundest veneration and accepting them as authentic history; nay, as inspired truth!

#### MUST ACCOUNT FOR THE MIRACLES.

In relation to the miracles of the New Testament the infidel, if he regards them as masterly frauds on men’s senses, committed at the time and by the parties supposed in the records, must believe that a vast number of apparent miracles, involving the most astounding phenomena—such as the instant restoration of the sick, blind, deaf and lame, and the resurrection of the dead—performed in open day, amidst multitudes of malignant enemies—imposed alike on *all*, and triumphed at once over the strongest prejudices and the deepest enmity—those who received them and those who rejected them differing only in the certainly not very trifling particular as to whether they came from heaven or from hell—and that those who were thus successful in this extraordinary conspiracy against men’s senses and against common sense were Galilean Jews, such as all history of the period represents them—ignorant, obscure, illiterate, and above all previously bigoted, like all their

countrymen, to the very system of which, together with all other religions on the earth, they modestly, by these frauds, meditated the abrogation. Or, if he regard these miracles as either a congeries of deeply-contrived fictions or accidental myths, he must believe that accident and chance have given to these legends their exquisite appearance of historic plausibility; and on *either* supposition he must believe (what is infinitely more wonderful) that the world, while the fictions were being published, and in the known absence of the facts they asserted to be true, suffered itself to be befooled *into* the belief of their truth and *out* of its belief of all the systems it *did* previously believe to be true, and that it acted thus notwithstanding persecution from without as well as prejudice from within. Furthermore, that the men who were engaged in the compilation of these monstrous fictions (which, according to the admission of Strauss himself, the strictest historic investigations bring within thirty or forty years of the very time in which all the alleged wonders they relate are said to have occurred) chose them as the vehicle of the purest morality; and, though the most pernicious deceivers of mankind, were yet the most scrupulous teachers of veracity and benevolence!

MUST BELIEVE THAT BAD MEN DEVISED AND  
PROPAGATED A HOLY SYSTEM OF TRUTH.

The infidel must believe that, although the Christian religion gives no countenance to sin in any shape or person, curbs all passions and denounces all vices, and although its founders knew that the propagators of such a system would, of course, be under the necessity of appearing to conform to it very rigidly themselves—

a task clearly that would be most irksome and painful to any other than really righteous persons—a perpetual crucifixion, indeed; yet these men, who were utterly destitute of holy principle—instead of devising a system like that of the surrounding Pagans, which would allow their lives to match freely with their wicked hearts, or one like that of Mohammed, which would leave their passions and their policy large liberty, or one such as the Jews had framed out of Moses by glosses and Rabbinical traditions, which would allow at least their pride, ambition, avarice and revenge to walk abroad in open day—devised this strict Christianity, which would grant them no license whatever, and even refuse to be propagated unless they would cut off all spotted indulgences and live the lives of saints.

MUST BELIEVE THAT PLEBEIAN JEWS DREW AN  
IDEAL PORTRAIT OF CHRIST.

The infidel must believe that certain plebeian Jews drew an ideal portrait of Jesus Christ; that in some way they emancipated themselves from the prejudices of their nation, which gloried in exclusive privileges, was steeped in religious bigotry and consoled itself amidst its calamities with the dream of a conquering Messiah, who should restore and augment the glories of ancient Israel; that they unswathed themselves from all these life-long notions, and conceived a Messiah whose whole life is depicted as one series of humiliations and ignominy—whose glories were all to be in the future and invisible world—who, in opposition to their national narrowness and intense bigotry, inculcated universal brotherhood and a world-wide

charity; who proclaimed the approaching abolition of all those darling privileges on which a Jew prided himself, in favor of a religion which should no longer know the badge of Jew or Gentile, and who at last died the death of a common malefactor. He must believe that these Jews "drew a portrait which it is inconceivable that even one should successfully execute, and yet which no less than four have dared to essay, and with similar success—a portrait in which even the combination of the human elements and their mode of presentation are of the most singular originality; in which obscurity, poverty and suffering are covered with a halo of glory which belongs to no hero of history or romance; in which a boundless sympathy with human frailty is conciliated with a holiness which knows no frailty; in which virtue, perfect as it is, is untinctured with that austerity which is almost always its shadow, and which so often detracts from its loveliness; in which patience and meekness, which can bear all wrongs and forgive them, are united with a courage on behalf of truth which the frowns of an opposing world cannot daunt, a gentleness which will not 'break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax,' with an indignation which launched at incurable hypocrisy more bitter and burning invectives than ever before fell from human lips—a portrait in which all these and many traits more, equally unlikely to be combined in human nature, are conjoined with supernatural qualities which, far from betraying discordance with the human elements, are so artfully wrought into the picture, that, instead of convincing the world (as they should have done) that Christ was a mere ideal, they have beguiled it into accepting Him as an historic

reality." Who can doubt that such a portrait, so far beyond the power of the philosophers, was still farther beyond the imagination of fishermen of Galilee? Who can question that the evangelists were as unable to originate such a portrait as Peter to have chiselled out of the marble the beauty of the Apollo Belvidere, or Paul to have painted that wonder of art, the Sistine Madonna?

MUST ACCOUNT FOR THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY  
AGAINST THE MIGHTIEST OPPOSITION.

The infidel must believe, moreover, that although in attempting to propagate a new religion to the exclusion of every other, the Apostles were undertaking what was entirely new and opposed to the views of all nations; although the doctrines they preached were resisted by all the influence of the several priesthoods, all the power of the several governments, all the passions, habits and prejudices of the people, and all the wit and pride of the philosophers of all nations; although the age was such as insured to their fabrication the most intelligent examination, with the strongest possible disposition to detect them; although in themselves these infatuated men were directly the reverse of what such resistance demanded, and, when they commenced, were surrounded by circumstances of the most depressing kind and by opposers specially exulting in the confidence of their destruction; although the mode they adopted was of all others most calculated to expose their own weakness and dishonesty, and to embitter the enmity and increase the contempt of their opposers, so that they encountered everywhere the most tremendous persecutions, till torture and death were

almost synonymous with the name of Christian ; although they had nothing to propose to Jew or Gentile as a matter of faith but what the wisdom of the world ridiculed and the vice of the world hated, and all men were united in despising ; although they had nothing earthly with which to tempt any one to receive their fabrication, except the necessity of an entire change in all his habits and dispositions and an assurance that tribulations and persecutions must be his portion ; yet when philosophers, with all their learning, and rank, and subtlety, and veneration, could produce no effect on the public mind, these obscure Galileans, with their “myth,” obtained such influence throughout the whole extent of the Roman Empire, and especially in the most enlightened cities, that in thirty years what they themselves (by the supposition) did not believe they made hundreds of thousands of all classes—philosophers, senators, governors, priests, soldiers, as well as plebeians—believe and maintain unto death ; yea, that they planted this doctrine of their own invention so deeply that all the persecutions of three hundred years could not root it up. They established the Gospel so permanently that in three hundred years it was the established religion of an empire co-extensive with the known world, and continues still the religion of all civilized nations.

MUST EXPLAIN MONUMENTS, INSTITUTIONS, MEDALS,  
COINS, ETC.

Besides, Sir, the infidel must explain how it was that acute and subtle enemies, like Celsus, Porphyry and Julian, did not make short work of the argument by denying the main facts of the Christian history ; he



must explain the origin of the numerous monuments in the world which have been reared on the supposition of the truth of the great facts of Christian history—the ancient temples whose ruins are scattered everywhere, the tombs and inscriptions in the Catacombs at Rome, the sculptures and paintings which have called forth the highest efforts of genius in the early and the mediæval ages, and the books that have been written on the supposition that the religion had the origin ascribed to it in the New Testament; he must explain the observance of the first day of the week in so many lands and for so many ages in commemoration of the belief that Christ rose from the dead; he must explain the observance of the day which is supposed to commemorate the birth of the Redeemer, as one would have to explain the observance of the birthday of Washington on the supposition that Washington was a “myth,” and the observance of the fourth day of July on the supposition that what has been regarded as a history of the American Revolution was a romance; he must explain the ordinance kept up in memory of His death for nearly two thousand years on the supposition that the death of Christ never occurred on the cross at all; he must explain the honor and the homage done to the cross everywhere—as a standard in war, as a symbol of faith, as a charm or an amulet, as an ornament worn by beauty and piety, as reared on high to mark the place where God is worshipped, as an emblem of self-sacrifice, of love, of unsullied purity—the cross in itself more ignominious than the guillotine or the gibbet—for why should men do such things with a gibbet if all is imaginary? And he must explain all those coins, and medals, and memorials which crowd palaces, and

cabinets, and churches, and private dwellings, and which are found beneath decayed and ruined cities, on the supposition that all these are based on falsehood, and that in all history there has been nothing to correspond to them or to suggest them.

MUST FIND A REASON FOR THE EXISTENCE AND  
INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH.

Nor, only this—the infidel must explain the existence and influence of the Christian Church. The followers of Jesus, who constitute this society, are widely separated from each other by social position, by country and race and culture, by all their habits of outward life and inward thought. The outward form given to the worship in which their faith finds expression and to the organization in which they are combined for purposes of mutual fellowship and of action on the world have differed and do differ very widely ; but they agree in this, that they acknowledge one Father in Heaven, and live the life which they now live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them, and are animated by one Spirit flowing forth from Him to form His likeness in them, and continue patiently in well-doing for His sake, serving their generation in doing or suffering according to God's will.

This society has had its Thorntons, and Wilberforce, and Whitfield, and Calvin, and Fletcher, and Luther, and Zwingli, and Howard, and Butler ; its Ken, Evelyn, Baxter, Howe, Usher, Hammond, Hooker and the martyrs of the Reformation ; its Chalmers, Martyn, Edwards, Brainerd, Bunyan, McCheyne, Felix Neff, Oberlin, Eugenie de Guerin, Lacordaire and Besson ;

its Fenelon, Antoine Court, Philip de Mornay, Thomas a Kempis, Savanarola, St. Francis; its Bernard, Augustine, Chrysostom and Basil, and many scarcely less illustrious for their piety in other branches of Christ's Church. True, humble, devoted, exemplary followers of Jesus are, indeed, found in every age and in every community in which the Gospel is preached. They are found sometimes in palaces, sometimes among philosophers and men of science, far more often among the lowly, oftenest of all among the suffering. Any one almost can think of a mother, a father, a sister, or elder brother, who has watched like a guardian angel for his life—gone, perhaps, now where all care and suffering, even anxiety for him, is swallowed up in the full sunshine of God's own presence. We can recollect how, in the presence of such persons, sin became hateful, and doubt became almost impossible.

Now, all such persons tell us that the truth of what they believe concerning Christ is assured to them by an inward experience, which can scarcely be more deceptive than their consciousness of existence. Christianity claims to be a practical thing, a remedy for a great evil, the power of a new life to any one receiving it into his heart, and these witnesses tell us simply that they have tried the remedy and it has fulfilled its promise. They assure us that they feel the power of the new life within them, and they show it in its appropriate action.

What, then, is the *source* of this life which has thus shown itself all along the ages? What has produced the likeness of these true and faithful servants of the One Lord to Him and to each other? What is the mysterious power which has given cohesion and vitality

to the Christian Church through all the long centuries of persecution that have rolled away, and that preserves it in its beauty and beneficence and glory until this day? These are questions that the infidel is bound to answer if any respect at all is to be paid to his opinion. Can he do it? He might as well undertake to prove that truth and falsehood are identical, or that an effect does not require an adequate cause. Astronomy supplies an illustration. If the motion of *nebulæ* and worlds be once granted, then our physical science may find some possible solution for the succeeding phenomena of the solar system; but the difficulty is to account for that first impulse of the nebulous mass, for the originating motion of the order of the spheres. Once admit an original Divine impulse, a new formative, constructive power sent from without into human history, in the person of Jesus Christ, and then the existence, spread and growth of Christianity become an intelligible historical study; but it is impossible to find in history a natural cause for a supernatural movement, a material source for a spiritual life.

Such, Sir, are a few of the difficulties which a rejecter of Christianity has to surmount; a few of the paradoxes which he has to receive; and surely of such an one it may be truthfully said: "O infidel, great is thy faith!"

I cannot but add to this letter what I believe to be the real, radical and ruling cause of infidelity.

#### BAD CHARACTER OF INFIDELS.

John, Earl of Rochester, an infidel to whom, though of depraved morals, his friends often pointed as a star

of no common brilliancy, in his later days, wishing to undo the evil he had done by his profane scoffs against religion, often laid his hand upon the Bible and declared: "*a bad heart is the great objection against this holy Book.*"

Here is the real secret of opposition to the Word of God, as is proved by the principles and practice of those who have assailed it. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. Blount solicited his sister-in-law to marry him, and being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally a Protestant, then turned Papist, then Protestant again, merely to suit the times, and was, at the same period, infamous for vice in general and the total want of principle. Hobbes wrote his "*Leviathan*" to serve the cause of Charles I., but finding him fail of success, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the usurper, as Hobbes himself unblushingly declared to Lord Clarendon. Hume was revengeful, vain, and advocated suicide and adultery. Morgan had no regard for truth, as is evident from his numerous falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those very writings in which he labors to destroy Christianity. Bolingbroke was a rake and a flagitious politician. Voltaire, in a letter now in existence, requested his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie by denying that he was the author of the *Philosophical Dictionary*. D'Alembert in his answer informed him that he had told the lie. Voltaire has indeed expressed his own moral character perfectly in the following words: "Mons. Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed or not." He also solemnly professed to believe the Roman Catholic reli-

gion, also at the same time he elsewhere professed to doubt the existence of God. Paine was the slave of low and degrading habits, and Rousseau an abandoned sensualist, and guilty of the basest actions, which he scruples not to state and palliate.

Such is the record of many prominent infidels, and that their opposition to the Bible is traceable to the depravity of their hearts rather than to the conviction of their intellects is evident from the eulogies—some of which we have already noticed—which they felt constrained to pronounce on the very volume they sought to destroy.

#### GOOD CHARACTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE BIBLE.

Turning now to the avowed friends of the Bible, how marked the contrast! We find them to be of an entirely different character from that of its enemies. Wherever we find a man of splendid and surpassing goodness we are sure to find a believer in Christ whom all the vices hate and persecute. Wherever we find even a devout Theist we are sure to find him as devout a Christian. Wherever we find even an habitually praying person we are sure to find him kneeling by the side of a Bible. Everywhere those who love the Word of God are upright and useful men, whilst those who reject it are the blots and the bane of society.

The artless argument in this direction used by the African prince, who visited England many years ago, is worthy of serious consideration. The gentleman to whose care he was intrusted took great pains to convince him that the Bible was the Word of God, and he received it as such, with great reverence and simplicity. His reasoning in the case was this—"When



I found all good men minding the Bible, and calling it the Word of God, and all bad men disregarding it, I then was sure that the Bible must be what good men called it, the Word of God."

## SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

SIR: In asking your attention to the *progress of Christianity*, I need only remind you that it arose in an enlightened and sceptical age, but among a despised and narrow-minded people. It earned hatred and persecution at home by its liberal genius and opposition to the national prejudices; it earned contempt abroad by its connection with the country where it was born, but which sought to strangle it in its birth.

And yet, notwithstanding the fierce resistance it had to encounter, the Gospel grew, and at length made its influence widely felt. Its noble philosophy, notwithstanding the feebleness of the instruments employed, and its opposition to the prejudices and passions of all classes, settled itself in the conviction of the loftiest intellects, while the voice of mercy which it uttered, the love of mercy which it proclaimed, spread gladness and hope through myriads of despairing men. Its morals checked the progress of social corruption, its benevolence set the captive at liberty, and gave protection to the oppressed. Its manifested immortality controlled one world by the revealed solemnities of another. Paganism fell prostrate before it, like the Dagon of Philistia, and lay broken and mutilated on the very thresholds of the temples where it had been adored. The account given in the book of Acts of the multitude of early converts, of the dispersion of the Chris-

tians, and of the success of Paul's labors, is confirmed by the most unexceptionable testimony.

We learn from Tacitus that in the year of our Lord 63, thirty years after His death, there was an immense multitude of Christians in Rome. From the capital of the world the communication was easy through all the parts of the Roman empire, and no country then discovered was too distant to hear the Gospel. Accordingly it is generally agreed that before the destruction of Jerusalem, Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Ethiopia on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ. And Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, being frequently visited during that period by Roman emperors or their generals, there is no improbability in what is affirmed by Christian historians, that the Gospel was preached in the capital of that island thirty years after the death of our Saviour. In the book of Revelation it appears from the epistles which John was commanded to write to the ministers of the Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, that there were, during the life of that apostle, seven regular churches in Asia Minor. As to the progress of our religion subsequent to this period, we derive no light from the books of the New Testament, because there is none of them which we certainly know to be of a later date than the destruction of Jerusalem, but there are other authentic proofs of its wide and rapid spread.

The younger Pliny, proconsul of Bithynia, writes in the end of the first century to the Emperor Trajan, asking directions as to his conduct with regard to the

Christians. He represents that many of every age and rank were called to account for bearing the Christian name; that the contagion of "that superstition," as he called it, had spread not only through the cities, but through the villages and fields; that the temples had been deserted, and the usual sacrifices neglected. There are extant two apologies for Christianity, written by Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, and one by Tertullian before the end of it. These apologies, which were public papers addressed to the Emperor and the Roman magistrates, mention with triumph the multitude of Christians. And there is a work of Justin Martyr, entitled "A Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," published about the year 146, in which he thus speaks: "There is no nation, whether of Barbarians or Greeks, whether they live in wagons or tents, amongst whom prayers are not made to the Father and Creator of all through the name of the crucified Jesus."

The Gospel in four centuries had pervaded the civilized world; it had mounted the thrones of the Cæsars; it had spread beyond the limits of their sway, and had made inroads upon barbarian nations whom their eagles had never visited; it had gathered all genius and all learning into itself, and made the literature of the world its own; it survived the inundation of the barbarian tribes, and conquered the world once more by converting its conquerors to the faith; it survived an age of barbarism; it survived the restoration of letters; it survived an age of free inquiry and scepticism, and has long stood its ground in the field of argument, and commanded the intelligent assent of the greatest minds that ever were.

Thus did the truth which had descended from heaven grow like a tree, shooting up under the fructifying influences which distilled and beamed upon it. The church expanded and strengthened under the living presence of its Lord, and it gradually and steadily increased under the holy walk of those who had embraced its faith, their constancy under suffering, the blood of their martyrs, and the dispersion of its harassed and persecuted members, who, having no other means to confound the fleshly wisdom of the world, were enabled to do this by their holy living and triumphant dying. And thus has the Gospel continued to grow, until it is at present professed throughout the most civilized and enlightened part of the world, and it has been carried in the progress of modern discoveries and conquests to the remotest quarters of the globe, exhibiting in the life of Jesus a picture, varied and minute, of the perfect human united with the divine, in which the mind of man has not been able to find a deficiency or detect a blemish—a picture copied from no model and rivalled by no copy—it has accommodated itself to every clime, it has retained through every change a salient spring of life, which enables it to throw off corruption and repay decay, and renew its youth, amid outward hostility and inward division. In this wonderful progress and power who can fail to see the evidence of its divine origin?

## EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

SIR: Socrates has defined true philosophy to be "the study of death." That polished scholar, Addison, declared that "in all history there is nothing so instructive as a faithful account of the manner in which eminent men have met that trying hour when they passed from time into eternity." Certainly no other occasion is more impressive, nor is there any in which the true character is so likely to be developed. The utterances that come to us from the brink of the grave fall on the ear like an echo from the throne of eternity itself. However long and closely the veil of deceit may have been worn, we expect to find it there laid aside, for the man must be so far debased by his wickedness that little of humanity can yet belong to him who is not awed into sincerity and honesty when about to appear in the presence of that omniscient Judge who "searches the heart and tries the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Death is emphatically "the honest hour." It not only *seals* character, but also *reveals* it.

### HAPPY DEATH OF CHRISTIANS.

How strongly, Sir, does the happy death of Christians, when viewed in contrast with the miserable end of sceptics and scoffers, attest the divine origin and the supreme excellence of the Bible!



## PAUL.

When Paul stood on the shore of eternity his triumphant language was, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

## BEDE.

In his last hour the venerable Bede exclaimed—"I desire to depart and be with Christ. I desire to see Christ, my King, in His beauty, as He is, and where He is. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," and then expired with the doxology still lingering on his lips.

## LUTHER.

The last words Luther was heard to utter were, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

## MELANCTHON.

Melancthon, when about to die, was asked by his friends if he wanted anything, and he replied, "I want nothing, and I am looking for nothing but Heaven," and then gently fell asleep in Christ.

## JOHN KNOX.

When John Knox was near his last breath, a friend who had prayed with him, having asked whether he had heard what was said, "Would to God," was his reply, "that you had all heard those words with such

an ear and heart as I!" Then, looking heavenward, he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and, without a struggle, entered into the joy of his Lord.

## ADDISON.

Addison's reply to a young nobleman, who requested him to impart his last injunctions, was, "I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die."

## HALYBURTON.

Halyburton, when dying, thus addressed those around him—"I dare, in the mercy of God, and by the power of His grace, look death in the face in its most ghastly shape, and hope to have in a little time the victory over it. Glory, glory to him! O what of God do I see! I have never seen anything like it! The beginning and end of religion are wonderfully sweet! I long for his salvation, I bless his name! I have found him! I am taken up in blessing him! I am dying: rejoicing in the Lord."

## DR. DODDRIDGE.

"I am full of confidence," said Dr. Doddridge, "there is a hope set before me; I have fled, I still fly for refuge to that hope. In Him I trust. In Him I have strong consolation, and shall assuredly be accepted in the Beloved of my soul."

## HERVEY.

"Do not think," declared Mr. Hervey, "that I am afraid to die! I assure you I am not. I know what my Saviour hath done for me, and I want to be gone." A little before his death he said,—“The great conflict is over! Now all is done!”

TOPLADY.

"It will not be long," exclaimed Mr. Toplady, "before God takes me, for no mortal man can live (bursting into tears) after the glories which God has manifested to my soul."

WESLEY.

The Rev. John Wesley, attempting to say something to those around his bedside which they could not understand, paused a little, and then with all the remaining strength he had, said in a holy triumph, "The best of all is, God is with us."

DR. SCOTT.

The morning of the day he died, Dr. Thomas Scott, the eminent commentator, said,—“This is heaven begun. I have done with darkness *forever—forever*. Satan is vanquished. Nothing remains but salvation with eternal glory—*eternal glory*.”

DR. PAYSON.

To some young men, whom Dr. Payson invited to visit him, he observed :—“Death comes every night and stands by my bedside in the form of terrible convulsions, every one of which threatens to separate the soul from the body. These continue to grow worse and worse, until every bone is almost dissolved with pain, leaving me with the certainty that I shall have it all to endure again the next night. Yet, while my body is thus tortured, the soul is perfectly, perfectly happy and peaceful—more happy than I can possibly express to you. I lie here and feel these convulsions extending higher and higher, without the least uneasiness, but my soul is filled with joy unspeakable. I seem to revive

in a flood of glory which God pours down upon me. And I know, I *know* that my happiness is but begun; I cannot doubt that it will last forever. And now, is all this a delusion? Is it a delusion which can fill the soul to overflowing with joy in such circumstances? If so, it is surely a delusion better than any reality; but no, it is not a delusion, I feel that it is not. I do not merely know that I *shall* enjoy all this; *I enjoy it now.*"

At another time, when his body was racked with inconceivable suffering, and his cheeks pale and sunken with disease, he exclaimed like a warrior returning from the field of triumph, "The battle's fought! the battle's fought! and the victory is *won!* the victory is won forever! I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness to all eternity!" At another time he exclaimed, "The celestial city is full in view—its glories beam upon me—its breezes fan me—its odors are wafted to me—its music strikes upon my ear, and its spirit breathes into my heart; nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears as a narrow rill, which may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission."

DR. FINLEY.

When Dr. Samuel Finley, President of Princeton College, lay upon his death-bed, the Rev. Elihu Spencer called to see him, and said, "I have come, dear sir, to see you confirm by facts the Gospel you have been preaching: pray, sir, how do you feel?" To which he replied, "Full of triumph. I triumph through Christ. Nothing slips my wings but the thoughts of my dissolution being prolonged. O, that

it were to-night! my very soul thirsts for eternal rest!"

HALL AND EVARTS.

Gordon Hall, expiring in the verandah of a heathen temple, far away from his native land, exclaimed, "Glory to thee, O God!" and repeated the words again and again till his breath ceased; and the calm and sober-minded Evarts burst forth at his death in the exclamation, "Wonderful, wonderful glory! We cannot comprehend such wonderful glory! I will praise him! I will praise him!"

"Go, child of darkness, see a Christian die!  
No horror pales his lips or dims his eye,  
No fiend-shaped phantoms of destruction start  
The hope religion pillows on his heart,  
When with a faltering hand he waves adieu  
To all who love so well and weep so true:  
Meek, as an infant to the mother's breast  
Turns, fondly longing for its wonted rest,  
He pants for where congenial spirits stray,  
Turns to his God, and sighs his soul away."

WRETCHED DEATH OF INFIDELS.—HUME.

The housekeeper of the infidel Hume, who was with him in his last moments, bore this testimony: "It is true, sir, that when Mr. Hume's friends were with him he was cheerful, and seemed quite unconcerned about his approaching fate; nay, frequently spoke to them of it in a playful and jocular way; but when he was alone the scene was very different; he was anything but composed; his mental agitation was so great as often to alarm me greatly. He struggled to appear composed, even before me; but to one who attended his bedside for many days and nights, who witnessed his

disturbed sleep and more disturbed wakings, who frequently heard his voluntary breathings of remorse and frightful startings, it was no difficult matter to determine that all was not right within. This continued and increased until he became insensible. I hope I may never be called upon to witness a similar scene."

## TALLEYRAND.

The famous Talleyrand, on the day before his death, wrote the humiliating confession: "Behold, eighty-three years have passed away! What cares! What agitations! What anxieties! What ill will! What sad complications! and all without other results, except great fatigue of body and mind, a profound sentiment of discouragement for the future, and disgust for the past!"

## VOLTAIRE.

Voltaire in his last illness said to his physician, "Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life." The doctor answered, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks." Voltaire replied, "Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me," and soon after expired.

## PAINE.

Thomas Paine in his last illness would not be left alone night or day. He would call out during his paroxysms of distress, without intermission, "O Lord, help me! God help me! Jesus Christ, help me! O Lord, help me," etc. Dr. Manley put the following questions to him: "Mr. Paine, what must we think of your present conduct? Why do you call upon Jesus Christ to help you? Do you believe that he can help



you? Do you believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ?" After a pause of some minutes, he answered, "I have no wish to believe on that subject."

#### NEWPORT.

Sir Francis Newport, who had received an early religious training, but after he had arrived at mature years fell into bad company and became an infidel, on his death-bed exclaimed, "Whence this war in my heart? What argument is there now to assist me against matter of fact? Do I assert that there is no hell while I feel one in my own bosom? Am I certain that there is no after retribution when I feel a present judgment? Do I affirm my soul to be as mortal as my body when this languishes and that is vigorous as ever? O that any one could restore to me my ancient guard of piety and innocence! Wretch that I am, whither shall I fly from this heart? What will become of me?"

#### HOBBS.

The last sensible words that the atheist Hobbes uttered were, "I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world."

"Lo, there, in yonder fancy-haunted room,  
What muttered curses tremble through the gloom;  
When pale, and shivering, and bedewed with fear,  
The dying sceptic felt his hour draw near;  
From his parched tongue no meek hosanna fell,  
No bright hope kindled at his faint farewell.  
As the last throes of death convulsed his cheek,  
He gnashed and scowled and raised a hideous shriek,  
Rounded his eyes into a ghastly glare,  
Locked his white lips, and all was mute despair."

## NINETEENTH LETTER.

SIR: Lord Lyttleton has said and ably demonstrated, "that the conversion and apostleship of Paul alone, duly considered, is of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity a divine revelation." I do not understand this eminent scholar as affirming that Christianity depends on this argument. Nor is this the case. Were the conversion of Paul nothing but a mere myth, were his apostleship an imposture, Christianity would still be divine. The biography of Christ is Christianity, and the truth of that biography is supported by its own sublime nature, by the voice of all history, by its fitness to the spiritual constitution and exigencies of man, and by the supernatural flood of influence it has poured into the ages. Still, as Paul's conversion is one of the great corroborative proofs of the Christian system, I ask for it your special and serious consideration.

What was Paul *before* the great change which he experienced on his way to Damascus? Both on the side of his father and mother, *his extraction was purely Jewish*, and his religious education had been exclusively of this character. The nation to which he belonged were proudly mindful of their distinctions, studied their law with active investigation, and defended it with ardent zeal. There was, too, everything in Christianity and its Founder to excite and strengthen their

prejudices as a degenerate people. Jesus of Nazareth, instead of appearing according to their expectation of the Messiah, as a great and victorious prince, invested with secular pomp and glory, to break asunder the Roman yoke, and raise the nation from which He sprang to the pinnacle of human greatness, had avowed His mission to be the establishment of a spiritual kingdom, had lived in the most abject poverty and died in the deepest ignominy.

Paul was a *Pharisee*. Early had he identified himself with this division of his countrymen, and highly was he esteemed among them for the zeal, precision, and ability, as well as uncompromising resolution with which he adhered to the rules, ordinances, and doctrines of the most rigid of the sect. With them he courageously contended for his own imaginary excellencies, for the abrogated rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, and for legal performances as entirely sufficient for salvation.

Paul was a man of *worldly ambition*. With his powerful talents, finished education, the popularity he had secured by his outward sanctimoniousness, his untiring energy, and the influence of distinguished connections, he needed not to be told that the fairest opportunity for self-advancement was opened up before him. Nor was he indisposed to appreciate the advantages of this kind which he enjoyed. This we learn from his manner of speaking of them after their renunciation: "What things were *gain* to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

Paul was a *violent persecutor of the followers of Jesus*. He was a man characterized by such ardor of temperament, hardihood of nerve, and passion of character,

that it was impossible for him to embark in any enterprise without allowing it to absorb and concentrate the strength of all his powers. The people of God were like a scattered and defenceless flock, and he was like a beast of prey ready to devour them. He tells us that many of them he had shut up in prison, and that when they were put to death he gave his voice against them, and that he punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme that worthy name by which they were called, and that he was so exceedingly mad against them that he persecuted them even to strange cities. And now, when on another journey of iniquity to Damascus, he is filled with wrath. He is rejoicing with hellish rapture in the thoughts of his expected success. He is breathing out threatening and slaughter. Having drawn near to the place of his destination, he is savagely exulting at the thought of being so near his prey. His heart is hot within him. It burns with rancor and cruelty. His breath is flame. The volcano of his breast is heaving and swelling, and pouring out its streams of fire on every side. Yet, just in this state of mind—a state the most unfavorable of all others to the reception of Christianity—a voice from heaven reaches his ear, a more powerful voice reaches his heart, he feels, as by the stroke of lightning, the force of evidence and the power of truth, and all the sentiments of astonishment, conviction, penitence, deep humiliation, instant resolution, undaunted decision, and unreserved consecration are combined in his memorable prayer, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Now, Sir, what was Paul’s history *after* this crisis in his career? Never was there a more wonderful revul-

sion of judgment—never a more thorough renovation of character. The “feet which had been swift to shed blood” are consecrated to bear the Gospel through the vast extent of the Roman empire. We find this “prisoner of the Lord” planting churches, strengthening those already planted, preaching in synagogues, and in all places of public resort, the faith which he once destroyed, visiting from house to house, writing epistles, reasoning with the learned, grappling with the enemies of civil liberty, and asserting the sacred rights of freedom. Everywhere, whether at liberty or in bonds, amid the court of Areopagus or amongst the barbarians at Melita, we see one great object before him, giving animation to his motives, consistency to his character, and concentration to his efforts—that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified. As we trace his history we find him willing to be hurried from tribunal to tribunal, from province to province, sometimes before the Romans, sometimes before the Jews, sometimes before the High Priest of the synagogue, and sometimes before the procurator of Cæsar—willing to hunger and thirst, be naked, and be buffeted, have no certain dwelling-place, labor with his hands, be reviled, defamed, imprisoned, and beaten with rods, willing to be in perils of waters, of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, by the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, among false brethren, to be in weariness and painfulness, in watchings and fastings often—in one word, willing to spend his days in such a way that he belonged to the number of those who, if they had not had hope beyond this life, had been of all men most miserable, and ready, when those days were to end, to give himself up a willing martyr, saying, “I

am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

How, then, Sir, is this great and glorious change to be accounted for? What occasioned it? "Was it a trick played upon the persecutor by those he came to harass? Was it the weak fancy of a fanatic? Or was it a tale devised to cover the resolution previously taken of going over to the persecuted party? None of these suppositions will account for the circumstances. We cannot doubt the fact. For there are letters extant by the man himself, the authenticity of which not even the most determined sceptic can object to, in which he refers to the change produced in him. It could not be with the expectation of worldly advantage. For, as we have already seen, the followers of Christ were as yet a small and uninfluential body, unable to protect themselves from any outrage that bigotry and malice might plan against them. And Saul, as we have also seen, was already in high favor with the ruling party in Church and State, all the rewards which usually allure ambitious men being most surely in his grasp by pursuing his present career. And he was not an unstable man. Had he through any pique deserted the chief priests, we should assuredly have found him vacillating and changing sides on subsequent occasions. It is useless to say that he was deceived by a trick. And to imagine that the vision was the figment of his own brain, or that he magnified some ordinary natural phenomenon into a miraculous interposition, would be to adopt a theory which a child might refute. The character of Paul, as described in the Acts, and to be gathered from his own writings, utterly destroys such a notion. The idea, that he who an-



swered for himself before Agrippa, and penned the Epistle to the Romans, was but a dreamy enthusiast, is perfectly preposterous. There is but one sound conclusion, then. It is that by the divine voice Saul was taught to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth that Messiah for whom the ancient seers had taught the nation to look forward."

And this conversion, we repeat, is one of those signal miracles by which our cherished faith has been forever ratified. It is a fact which comes home to the bosoms of men, represses the confidence of infidelity, and breaks the slumbers of indifference. It is an event which, as strongly as any other, vouches for Christianity and enables us to say, "Here is the finger of God." It shows us, if we are willing to see it, that our religion is from above, that it is not a system of delusion, but that it is the truth, the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. It exhibits to us in Paul, one who was neither deceived in what he believed, nor a deceiver in what he professed and preached—an argument which all can understand, and which none but a mind swayed by a wicked heart can deny.

## TWENTIETH LETTER.

SIR: In my first letter to you I remarked that as far as a revelation from God is concerned, we are shut up to "the Bible or nothing." This is a truth which it is well for every man seriously to weigh.

### HINDOO SCRIPTURES.

Suppose Christianity were set aside, what would be its substitute? Shall it be the religion of the Hindoo Scriptures? To say nothing of their local and partial nature, it is, as every scholar knows, becoming more and more evident that the only theological dogmas of any religious power, or even philosophical interest, which these scriptures contain, are but the almost defaced remains of ideas belonging to the old patriarchal revelation of the World-Deliverer, and which are brought out in all their sublimity in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. In all other respects, in their monstrous mythology, in their mind-destroying pantheism, above all, in their revolting impurity, they are what the depraved Hindoo mind has made them, and what they, in their reaction, have made the present Hindoo race.

### BUDDHISM.

Or shall Buddhism be the Bible's substitute? This system, as is well understood, is virtually a philosophic atheism. In it there is no God but intellect. The

Buddhist, in reality, worships nothing higher than his own soul, or the conception of that soul, developed under more propitious circumstances than his individual life has supplied. And the moral abominations and monstrous forms of human society, which have grown up beneath the shelter of his creed and his worship, are too well known to require mention.

#### THE KORAN.

It is only necessary to add that the idea of the Koran being substituted for the Bible is simply preposterous. Not to notice the extravagances and follies which it contains, it is at variance in many parts with the established facts of science, and in many other parts with just moral sentiments. Besides, in all its really important aspects, it is a copy from Judaism, or from Christianity, or from both. None acquainted with the Jewish and Christian Scriptures—the latter and especially the former, much more ancient than the Koran—can doubt this fact for a moment. It is from the Koran's oft-asserted claim to be the religion of Abraham, "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed," that it has its real power, its widespread, long-enduring hold in so many parts of the older continents. But it would be futile to dwell at length on this subject. The Koran abounds with absurdities, bombast, unmeaning images, and low sensuality. It abounds in repetitions and contradictions. Probably none but a Mahometan would challenge any comparison between the Koran and the Bible. The one is the genuine revelation of the true God in Christ; the other is a mock revelation, without Christ and without atonement. The one is historical, and em-

bodies the noblest aspirations of the human race in all ages to the final consummation ; the other begins and stops with Mohammed. The one combines endless variety with unity, universal applicability with local adaptation ; the other is uniform and monotonous, confined to one country, one state of society, and one class of minds. The one is the book of the world, and is constantly travelling to the ends of the earth, carrying spiritual food to all classes of the people ; the other stays at home, and is insipid to all who have once fully tasted the true Word of the living God. "The Koran," says Gibbon, "is an endless, incoherent rhapsody of fable and precept and declamations, which seldom excites a sentiment or idea, which sometimes crawls in the dust, and is sometimes lost in the clouds." Reiske denounces it as the most absurd book, and a scourge to a reader of sound common sense.

I notice, Sir, let me incidentally remark, that in one of your lectures you pushed forward the success of Mohammed as a *parallel* to that of Christianity. But did you not know at the very time that there is a *perfect contrast* between the two, both as to the means employed, and the effect produced ? The *means* of the Arabian impostor were conquest and compulsion, the *effect* was to legalize and sanctify, so to speak, the natural passions of men for plunder and sensual gratification ; and it surely argues either a very frail judgment, or a criminal disposition to object, that a contrast so marked should have been alleged by you to be a correspondence. Men were persuaded, when they were not *forced*, to join the ranks of Mohammed by the hope of plunder, and a present and future life of brutal gratification. Men were persuaded to join the Apostles

by the evidence of truth, and by the hope of future spiritual blessings, but with the certainty of present disgrace and suffering.

#### NATURAL RELIGION.

But assuming, as well might be assumed, that no man of ordinary intelligence would, on giving up the Bible, think for one moment of supplying its place with the Hindoo or Persian or Arabian or any other Scriptures, might he not supply it with Natural Religion? Might he not by the mere light of Nature hold fast to God, to His government, to our responsibility to Him, and to the reality of moral distinctions? There can be but one answer to this question. "The same principles of criticism and modes of reasoning which he has allowed to destroy his confidence in the Bible are equally good against the most elementary doctrines of the religion of Nature. It has long been seen that the leading objections against the Bible apply with equal force against the constitution and course of Nature, as the work of God. And it is easy to see that the whole way of dealing that puts away the Bible is just as pertinent against even the common principles of morality. With it one could as well disprove the guilt of lying and stealing and murder. That axe will cut down anything we please. It is impossible to deny that any one who allows objecting and cavilling against the Scriptures, to destroy his Christianity, is unable logically to save from its devouring edge the simplest teaching of Natural Religion. It strikes at the roots of all religious faith."

Besides, Sir, \*Natural Religion is uncertain in its teachings. "The first English deists," says Dr. Archi-

bald Alexander, "extolled Natural Religion to the skies, as a system which contained all that man needed to know, and as being simple and intelligible to the meanest capacity. But, strange to tell, scarcely any two of them are agreed what Natural Religion is, and the same discordance has existed among their successors. They are not agreed even in those points which are most essential in religion, and most necessary to be settled before any religious worship can be instituted. They differ on such points as these—whether there is any intrinsic difference between right and wrong, whether God pays any regard to the affairs of men, whether the soul is immortal, whether prayer is proper and useful, and whether any external rites of worship are necessary.

"Again, if deism be the true religion, why has piety never flourished among its professors? why have they not been the most zealous and consistent worshippers of God? Does not truth promote piety? and will it not ever be the case that they who hold the truth will love God most ardently, and serve him most faithfully? But what is the fact in regard to this class of men? Have they ever been distinguished for their spirit of devotion? have they produced numerous instances of exemplary piety? It is so much the reverse, that even the asking such reasonable questions has the appearance of ridicule. And when people hear the word 'pious deist,' they have the same sort of feeling as when mention is made of an honest thief, or a sober drunkard."

The question, then, to be settled is, not whether we shall have Christianity, or some *other* religion, but, whether we shall have Christianity, or *no* religion.



Beyond a doubt, by the drift of modern discussion, we are being narrowed down to the choice—Revelation, or Atheism—Revelation, or the giving up of all hope in a life beyond the grave. One would think that, in the light which history throws on this subject, the enemies of God would desist from their malignant effort to disprove His existence and government, even if they had respect alone to man's temporal happiness. Look at France,—when she threw off the restraints of religion, exalted a strumpet as the Goddess of Reason, and wrote on the gates of her cemeteries: "Death is an eternal sleep." The crimes perpetrated by that nation filled the world with horror, and the miseries it suffered changed all the histories of the preceding sufferings of mankind into idle tales. The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison, the inhabitants converted into felons, and the common doom of man commuted, for the violence of the sword and the bayonet, the sinking boat and the guillotine. To contemplative men, it seemed for a season as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and its funeral. Within the short space of ten years,—years of debauchery, rapacity, fraud, and every evil work,—not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country by the influence of atheism. Were the world to adopt and be governed by the doctrines of France, what crimes would not men perpetrate? what agonies would they not suffer?

And yet, notwithstanding this light from the past, there are to be found men willing to attempt the overthrow of the Bible, and the inculcation of atheism. "O my soul, come not thou into their

secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united!"

"I'd rather be the wretch that scrawls  
Its idiot nonsense on the walls,  
The gallant bark of reason wreck'd,  
A poor quench'd ray of intellect,  
With slabber'd chin and rayless eye,  
And mind of mere inanity,  
Not quite a man, nor quite a brute,  
Than I would basely prostitute  
My powers to serve the cause of vice,  
To build some jewell'd edifice,  
So fair, so foul,—framed with such art,  
To please the eye and taint the heart,  
That he who has not power to shun,  
Comes, looks, and feels himself undone!"

Wo unto the man who "sitteth in the seat of the scornful!" Happy, thrice happy are they who seek to make the Bible the "light of their feet," and "a lamp unto their path,"—who trust in its promises, and strive to obey its precepts.

Let us, instead of hurling at this matchless volume the shafts of derision, which are sure to rebound and strike us with defeat and dismay, then doom us to everlasting sorrow and contempt, prize it and cherish it as the "unspeakable gift" of God to ignorant and erring man. And let us do all we can, by word and act, to disseminate its influence. Let us not fail to give it freedom, to give it utterance. Let us set it up on the pedestal where it will be seen by all people, unfolding there the copy of the book itself, that from early morning through the day the eyes of men may look up and greet it, and in the shades of evening and during the long night they may repose beneath it, while it still watches over and guards the civilization it has

made, until that day shall dawn that shall be followed by no eve and no darkness, for the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

THE END.





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